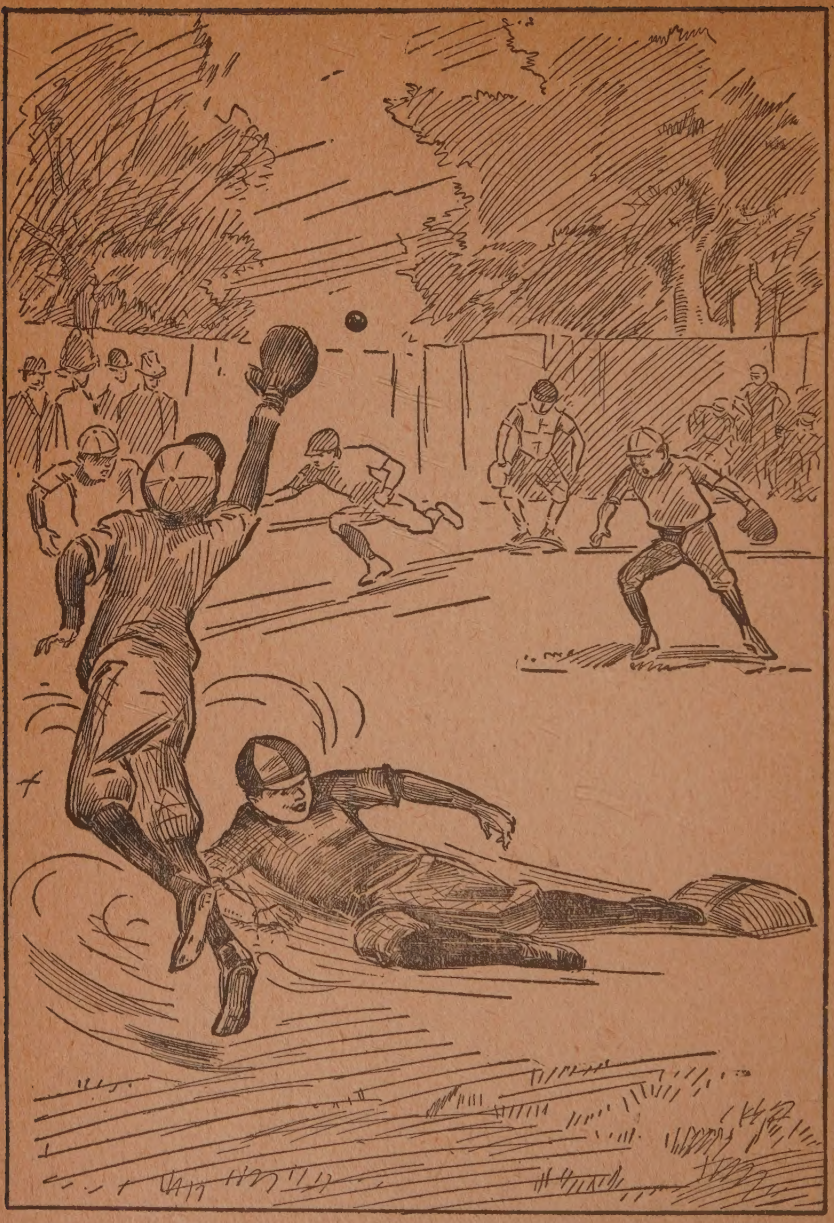
TOMMY TIPTOP
AND HIS
BASEBALL NINE

RAYMOND STONE

To Ruth
with
love
and
best wishes
from your
Pal Dutzy.



Will Was Safe on Second Base.

Frontispiece

TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS BASEBALL NINE

OR THE

BOYS OF RIVERDALE AND THEIR GOOD TIMES

BY

RAYMOND STONE

AUTHOR OF "TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS FOOTBALL ELEVEN,"
"TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS WINTER SPORTS," ETC.

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BY RAYMOND STONE

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TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS WINTER SPORTS; Or, Jolly Times on the Ice and in Camp

TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS BOAT CLUB; Or, The Young Hunters of Hemlock Island

TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS BOY SCOUTS; Or, The Doings of the Silver Fox Patrol

TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS GREAT SHOW; Or, Raising Some Money That Was Needed

(Other volumes in preparation)

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Tommy Tiptop and His Baseball Nine

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Tommy Tiptop and His Baseball Nine

CHAPTER I

TOMMY PLAYS BALL

"I'M GOING to be up at the bat first!"

"You're not, Tommy Tiptop! It's my turn!"

"No, you were up first the last time we played. It's Sammie Small's turn, if it isn't mine," and Tommy Tiptop, a sturdy, stout chap of ten years, looked around at his companions, boys of about his own age. They had gathered on a vacant lot after school to have a ball game.

"That's right!" cried Sammie Small. "I haven't had a chance to hit the ball this week. You fellows keep me chasing after the ones you knock all the while."

"Well, come on then, if we're going to play!" exclaimed Tommy, who always liked to be busy, if not at one thing then at another. And when he found that it wasn't his turn to bat he was willing to do something else. "Come on!" he cried. "I'll pitch and Sammie can bat. We haven't got enough for sides, and——"

"Yes, we have, too!" suddenly cried Horace Wright. "Here come Dan Danforth and George Squire. That makes five on a side, and we'll choose——"

"Who are going to be the captains?" asked Dan, as he and George hurried up, tossing their books in a pile on the green grass.

"I'll be one captain!" exclaimed Tommy Tiptop.

"Oh, you always want to be a captain!" sniffed Horace.

"Well then, be it yourself," agreed Tommy quickly. "Only let's play. What's the good of standing here talking all day?"

"You're talking as much as the rest of us," put in Patsie Cook. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll race to the big tree, and the two first fellows to get there shall be the captains."

"That's the way!" came in a chorus from the other lads, and instantly they set off at top speed for a big maple tree that grew on the edge of a brook which flowed through the meadow near the school—a meadow where the small boys used to play ball. The larger lads had a regular diamond, with canvas bags for bases and a real home plate that didn't get lost or kicked aside every time a cow walked through the field. But Tommy and his friends were satisfied with their way of doing things.

Away the ten young chaps raced, each eager to be one of the two first at the tree, and so gain the honor of being one of the captains.

"Come on, Tommy!" called Dan Danforth, looking back to note the progress of the other lad, for Dan was a year older than our hero and liked him very much. "Come on, Tommy; don't let Sammie beat you!"

"I—I won't!" gasped Tommy, his sturdy legs going back and forth rapidly. "I—I'm coming!"

"Go on, I'm going to win!" cried Sammie, as with a burst of speed he got ahead of Tommy. Sammie and Dan were now the two foremost runners, but the big tree was

still some distance away, and Tommy had a chance, for he was directly behind Sammie. The other boys were strung out in a long line behind.

"Go on, Tommy! Go on!" yelled some of the boys in the rear. "We want you for our captain!"

"I'm going to be the captain!" cried Sammie, and he looked back to see how close Tommy was to him.

And then something happened. Sammie did not see a crooked stick that was right in his path, and the next moment his toe caught under it. He tripped and then went sprawling in the soft grass, rolling over and over.

"Now's your time, Tommy!" yelled George Squire, who had no chance of winning. "Go on, Tommy! Leg it! Leg it!"

"That ain't fair!" cried Sammie, trying to jump up and keep on with the race.

"Sure it is!" exclaimed Dan. "He didn't trip you. You did it yourself. Go on and win, Tommy!"

"I'm going to!" came from Tommy, as he raced on faster than ever. He was soon at the side of Dan, and a few seconds later both were at the big tree, while Sammie, picking himself up, came on after them, but too late to win the race.

"Tommy and Dan are the captains!" cried Patsie Cook. "Take me on your side, Tommy!"

"I'm going to play on Dan's side!" exclaimed Sammie, who felt just a little bit angry at Tommy for having beaten him.

"All right," answered Dan, good-naturedly, and he was satisfied, for Sammie was a good player.

And so the choosing of the sides went on, and then the ten lads hurried back to the middle of the field, where the

grass was not so long, and where you did not have to hunt half an hour to find the ball after you had batted it.

"Let's see who has first inning," suggested Tommy. So he tossed the bat to Dan, who caught it in one hand, about half way down. Then Tommy put his hand on top of Dan's, and Dan did the same thing to Tommy's pudgy fist, until the top of the bat was reached, when Tommy, having the last hold, was entitled to choose first or last inning, just as he liked.

"He hasn't got his whole hand on that bat!" exclaimed Sammie, who wanted his side to have the advantage.

"I have so!" cried Tommy.

"Hit the top of the bat with a brick and you can soon tell," advised George Squire.

This was done, and it was found that when the bat was tapped Tommy's hand was not touched, so Sammie's objection did not amount to anything.

"Take last inning, Tommy," advised Patsie Cook, "then we'll have a better chance to win."

"I will not!" cried our hero. "I'm going to get our raps in first, and then if any of the fellows want to quit we won't get left. We'll take first whacks."

"All right," agreed Dan. "Now, boys, we'll see who wins. We'll only play two bases, and that will leave one fellow to run after the balls. I'll pitch, Sammie can catch, and Pete Johnson can race after the balls."

"I will not!" cried Pete. "I want to be on base."

"Jake Carroll and Harold Mott are going to be on the bases," declared the captain.

"Then I won't play!" came from Pete.

"Yes, you will, too. I'm captain, and what I say goes! You get out and race after the balls, and maybe I'll let you catch next inning."

"Oh, will you? All right!" cried Pete, much pleased.

"Hey, somebody has taken our home plate!" cried Tommy, who, assuming the right because he was captain, had come to bat first. "That nice flat stone we had for home is gone."

"I guess Billy Newhouse took it just to be mean!" exclaimed Dan. "I saw him walking around here this morning, and he threw something in the brook. Maybe it was our stone."

"Oh, get another stone and play ball!" cried Sammie Small. "Do you want us to stay here all night? I want a chance to bat!"

"All right," agreed Tommy Tiptop. "Go ahead, I'm ready. This stone will do," and he picked up a small flat one and put it down in front of him, tapping his bat on it to show that the game might begin.

"Pitch him a curve now, Dan! Pitch him a curve!" cried Sammie from his position as catcher.

"Get out! He can't curve 'em!" retorted Patsie.

"I can't, eh? I'll show you!" cried Dan, and he sent in a swift one. It came straight for Tommy, who quickly turned his back, and received the ball on his shoulder.

"Ouch! You did that on purpose, Dan Danforth!" yelled the small batsman.

"I did not! You got right in the way of it. If you had stood still, it would have curved right around you."

"Oh, go on!"

"Take your base, anyhow, Tommy," advised Patsie. "That's the rule; when you're hit you take your base. I'll bring you in," and he grabbed up the bat that Tommy cast aside as he started for the stone which marked first base. Tommy rubbed his shoulder as he trotted along.

"Did I hurt you much?" asked Dan, a little sorry for the way the ball had slipped. "I didn't mean to."

"No, it doesn't hurt much," replied Tommy. "I don't mind. Now knock a good one, Patsie!"

Dan delivered another ball, and Patsie missed it, while the opposite side yelled with delight.

"That was too high!" said the batter. "I want one there," and he held the stick out in front of him to show where he liked the ball to come.

"Here it is!" exclaimed Dan, and he pitched the ball again.

There was a crash of the bat, and the ball went sailing over the grass.

"Run, Patsie! Run!" his friends advised him.

"Come on in, Tommy! Come on in!" were the other shouts, as Tommy, who had started for second base, reached it and hesitated about going "home." Then he concluded it was safe, and he raced on. But Pete Johnson had the ball now, and threw it in.

"Look out!" yelled George Squire. "He'll get you, Tommy!"

Sammie Small stretched out his hands to gather in the ball and put the runner out at the home plate.

"Slide, Tommy! Slide!" advised Patsie, who had reached second base and was resting there.

Tommy Tiptop dropped into the dust and slid the rest of the way home, getting there before the ball did. An instant later Sammie reached over and touched him on the back, crying:

"Out!"

"I am not!" yelled Tommy, springing to his feet. "I'm safe! I'll leave it to Dan."

"Yes, I guess he's safe," slowly admitted the captain of

the other team. "He's safe enough, Sam. Go on; we'll get the next one. Who's up?"

"George is," declared Tommy, looking at his clothes, which were covered with dust. "Gosh! Ma'll give it to me when I get home," he added, as he tried to remove some of the dirt with wisps of grass.

"Take your handkerchief," advised Ted Melton.

"Huh! And get that all dirt, too?" asked Tommy.

"You can wash that off in the brook."

"That's right, so I can," and Tommy began a vigorous scrubbing of his clothes with a handkerchief that was already pretty soiled.

"Say, what is this—a ball game or a laundry?" asked Sammie Small. "If you fellows want to clean your clothes, stand back and let us play ball. We want our innings out of this game!"

Ted and Tommy moved back out of the way, and the game went on.

"Two out all out, isn't it?" asked Sammie, as George Squire knocked a little fly that was caught by Dan.

"Yes, two out all out," agreed Tommy. "Say, I wish we had enough for a regular nine," he went on. "I'd like to play in a match game."

"You're too small."

"I am not. Some day I'm going to get up a regular nine, and have uniforms, and bases, and a lot of balls, so if we lose one we don't have to stop the game. I wish——"

"You're out!" interrupted Dan, calling to Frank Nixon, who was up at the bat. "Three strikes and you're out! Sam caught that last one."

"That's only two strikes!"

"It's three!" repeated Dan.

"I'll leave it to Tommy!" cried the other. "Was that three strikes, Tommy?"

"I didn't see," our hero was forced to admit. "I was cleaning the dust off my clothes. But we'll give it. Come out in the field, fellows," he called to his side.

"Huh! That's a hot way to play," complained Frank. "It was only two strikes!"

"Never mind, we got two runs," consoled Patsie, who had come in when Sammie missed a ball that the pitcher threw to him.

The game went on for some time, and the boys had much fun and several disputes, but there was no real quarrel, and they easily forgot their little differences.

When it came time for the fifth inning, which was the last they were to play, Dan's team got one run.

"Two more and we'll beat!" he called to his friends.

"Don't let 'em get anything!" advised Patsie.

"I won't," declared Tommy, who was pitching, and he kept his word, for that one run was all Dan's side got that inning, and Tommy's team won the game by seven runs to six.

"Let's see if we can't get more fellows here to-morrow, and have a better game. I wish we had more bats. One isn't enough. And we need some more balls. This one is losing the cover," said Tommy.

"Say, you'll be a professional if you keep on," exclaimed Dan, laughing.

"I'd like to be," answered Tommy, and then he and the other lads picked up their books and walked off the field, talking of the fun they had had.

"Oh, Tommy Tiptop!" exclaimed his sister Nellie, who met her brother a little later as he was nearing home. "You'll get it! Look at your clothes!"

"Does the dirt show much?" asked Tommy, anxiously.

"Oh, it's awful! Isn't it, Grace?" and Nellie turned to a girl with her.

"Couldn't help it—had to slide home to keep from getting put out," murmured the young ball player. "Say, Nellie, do you s'pose ma'll say much?"

"No, I guess not; there's too much going on at home," answered Nellie.

"What's going on?" asked Tommy quickly.

"It's a secret, and I'm not going to tell you," replied his sister. "You wouldn't let me come fishing with you the other day, and I'm not going to tell."

"Huh! Girls can't fish. They're afraid to put the worms on the hook," retorted Tommy. "But I'll let you come next time I go, if you'll tell me the secret."

"Nope. I haven't told anybody but Grace, and I'm not going to."

"Well, I don't care; keep your old secret, then! I'll get one of my own, and, anyhow, ma'll tell me when I get home," said Tommy, and broke into a run to find out what the news was that had caused his sister to act so strangely.

CHAPTER II

TOMMY MOVES AWAY

"WHY, ma, what's the matter?" cried Tommy, bursting into the house a little later. "What has happened? Was there a fire?"

Well might he ask, for the house, that was usually in such trim order, was now in confusion. The chairs were scattered about, and his mother was up on a step-ladder taking down the pictures from the wall, while out in the kitchen Mrs. Norah Flannigan, the washerwoman, was doing up dishes in pieces of newspaper and putting them in barrels and boxes.

"What's the matter, ma?" asked Tommy again, pausing in the doorway.

"Nothing, Tommy, dear," answered his mother. "We are going to move away, that's all. Get on your old suit, and you can help. Oh, what has happened to your clothes?" she added as she looked more closely at him.

"I slid in the dust, playing ball. But, ma, are we really going to move away? Where? When? I didn't hear anything about it before. Is this the secret Nellie meant?"

"I guess so, dear. Oh, that's your best school suit, and now I've got to stop and scrub it, and it will never look the same again. Oh, Tommy!"

"I didn't mean to, ma," he answered, tossing his books down on a chair and looking for a good safe place in which

to stand up the baseball bat. "I just slid. Then I tried to clean the dust off with bunches of grass and my handkerchief. My handkerchief's real clean," he went on. "I washed it out in the brook." And he pulled out a limp and damp rag to show.

"Yes, and then you put it in your pocket all wet; didn't you, Tommy?"

"I—I guess I did, ma."

"Oh, what creatures boys are! No, Mrs. Flannigan!" Mrs. Tiptop suddenly called to the washerwoman, who was packing the dishes, "don't put that big platter on top of the small cups. Put the big dishes on the bottom of the box, and the light ones on top."

"All right, mum. Sure, movin' is a terrible thing, isn't it, mum?"

"Indeed it is, Mrs. Flannigan. Now, Tommy, just slip on your old clothes and you can help. I wish Nellie was here. I need her."

"She's coming—I just met her. But why are we moving, ma, and what's the rush?"

"Your papa has a new position in Riverdale, and we are going to live in a nice large house there. We didn't expect to go so soon, and I thought I would have more time to pack, but they want your father there right away, and so we are going to-morrow."

"But I didn't hear anything about it," insisted Tommy.

"No, we hadn't quite made up our minds until last night, and we didn't expect to move for a week. Then word came this noon that we would have to be in Riverdale by to-morrow, so your father had to go out and get some vans for the furniture. I told Nellie about it this noon, but you rushed off in such a hurry after dinner that I didn't get a chance to speak to you."

"I wanted to play ball," explained Tommy. "Oh, say, I don't want to move, ma!"

"Why not?" and Mrs. Tiptop looked down on Tommy from the step-ladder, carefully holding a picture she had just taken off the wall. "Why not, my son?"

"Why, I won't know any of the fellows there; I'll have to go to a new school, and I've just started a baseball nine here. Oh, ma, can't I stay here? I could board at Patsie Cook's house. His ma is awful good, and she makes dandy cake! I don't want to move."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll have to go with us, Tommy," said his mother. "Come now, help me. You'll like it in Riverdale, I'm sure, and you'll soon get used to the new school. I dare say you'll find just as nice boys there as there are here, and you can start a baseball nine there. Come now, get on your old clothes, and you can wrap newspapers around these pictures, but don't break the glass."

"Oh, dear! I don't want to move!" exclaimed Tommy, but there was no help for it.

His sister Nellie came in a little later.

"Pooh! Now I know the secret!" exclaimed Tommy.

"Well, I knew it first," said the girl, who was two years younger than her brother, but who sometimes acted as if she thought she was older.

"You've got to help ma," went on Tommy. "I wonder what it's like in Riverdale?"

"It's nice there. Grace Reynolds has a cousin who lives in Riverdale, and she's going to be my friend, and sometimes Grace is coming to see us."

"I hope there are lots of fellows there," said Tommy. "I want to play ball."

"That's all you think of," retorted Nellie.

"Children, aren't you coming down to help?" called Mrs. Tiptop from the foot of the stairs, for brother and sister were in their rooms, changing their clothes, and calling to one another through the walls.

Once the shock of learning that he was going to move away from Millton—where he had lived all his life—had passed away, Tommy rather liked the idea of the change. He felt that it was quite an important event to move, and he began to plan how he would set about organizing his base-ball nine.

"I guess I'll call my nine the Riverdale Roarers," he decided as he slipped on his old trousers. "If we could get jackets with 'R. R.' on, they'd look fine. I'm going to ask ma if I can."

But when he got downstairs he found his father there, and listened to what his parents were talking about.

"The moving vans will be here the first thing in the morning," explained Mr. Tiptop, "and the man says we needn't bother to pack much besides the dishes and the kitchen things. They will attend to the rest. Hello, Tommy, how will you like it?"

"All right, I guess, pa, if I can play ball."

"Oh, you can play ball, I think. But now, come on. I want you to help me nail up some boxes."

"Then Nellie must wrap paper on the pictures," decided Mrs. Tiptop. And from then on there was a busy time in that house.

When the supper hour arrived, considerable packing had been done, and then, after the meal, they did more, so that by night they were almost ready for the vans.

Tommy dreamed that he was playing ball inside of one of the big padded wagons, and that he tried to run around

the bases, carrying a chair in one hand and a big platter in the other. Then someone shouted:

"Tommy, Tommy! Get up!"

"All right, I'm going to slide for home!" he answered, for he imagined it was one of his baseball companions shouting to him. Then he awakened and realized that it was his father calling to him to get up.

"Hurry!" said Mr. Tiptop. "The vans will soon be here, and we must get through with breakfast."

"And no school to-day!" cried Tommy in delight, as he hopped out of bed.

The confusion, which had started the evening before, was worse now, for everything seemed upset. Mrs. Tiptop managed to get a simple breakfast, and then there came a rumbling noise outside the house.

"It's the vans!" cried Tommy, running to a window. "Hurry! Now for some fun! Whoop!"

"Now, don't get in the men's way," advised Mr. Tiptop, as he went out to speak to the movers.

Then began an even more busy time. The men came into the house, looked over the things to be put in the vans, and began carrying out the piano and other heavy articles.

"I'm going to help!" cried Tommy, as he seized a chair and started out with it.

"Tommy! Tommy!" cried his mother. "That's too heavy for you!"

"No, ma, it isn't," he answered, as he thought of how he had often carried heavy logs when the boys were making a bonfire. "I can manage it."

He went out with the chair to the vans, narrowly escaping a collision with two men carrying a big bureau.

"Look out, youngster," advised one of the men as they

came out of the van after having put the bureau inside. "You might get stepped on."

"By one of the horses?" asked Tommy, anxiously.

"Well, no, not exactly," replied the man. "I meant by one of us. I wouldn't mean to step on you, of course," he said; "but I've got powerful big feet, an' when I steps on anything something generally happens — not always, but generally. Of course I wouldn't want to step on you, but I might do it, accidental like," and the man lifted up his foot and looked at it as though deciding what he would step on next. And, truly, it was a very big foot in a very large shoe. Tommy did not like the appearance of it, and yet the man seemed kind.

"Just don't get in the way, so's you'll get stepped on, youngster, that's all I advise you," went on the man, and Tommy promised that he would be careful. After that, when he carried out chairs and light pieces of furniture, he always looked to see if the man with the big feet was at a safe distance.

The moving men, even the one who was afraid he would step on Tommy, were good-natured, and they worked well. Nellie was helping her mother, and Mr. Tiptop was very busy also. Tommy was carrying out a wash-bench, when several of his boy friends came along the street.

"What's up?" asked Sammie Small.

"Moving. Going to Riverdale," replied Tommy, proudly.

"Aren't you coming to school?" asked Patsie Cook.

"Nope!"

"Say, I wish we were moving," added Dan Danforth. "Want any help, Tommy?" he asked, hopefully, thinking this would be an excuse for him to stay away from school.

"Now, you boys run along," advised one of the moving

men, "or you might get stepped on," and once more he looked at his big feet, raising one after the other slowly, as if to make sure he had not left any of them in the van by mistake.

"Say, it's too bad you're going to move away, Tommy," spoke Dan. "Just when the baseball season is starting, too."

"Oh, I'm going to organize a nine in Riverdale," said Tommy, as if he had organized ball teams all his life.

"You are?" cried Patsie.

"Sure!"

"Then maybe we'll get up a team and play you," went on Dan. "It isn't far to Riverdale."

"I wish you would," said Tommy. "It will be great sport. Say, now I've got to help carry out some more chairs. Good-by, fellows, if I don't see you again."

They all called good-by to Tommy and hurried on to school, looking back regretfully.

At last all the things in the house had been packed in the vans and the men were ready to drive off with them.

"Everything out?" asked the head mover of Mr. Tiptop.

"I guess so," he answered. "I'll take a trolley car, and I think we'll be there ahead of you. It's only about a ten-mile drive to Riverdale. I'm glad nothing got broken."

"And I'm glad nobody got stepped on," said the man with the big feet, as he looked first at Tommy and then at his own large shoes. "I'm real glad of that."

Then Tommy had an idea, as he saw the head mover climbing to the big seat, high up on the van.

"Can't I ride with him?" asked Tommy, pointing to the man. "I don't want to go in the trolley. It's no fun. Let me ride on the wagon, mamma."

"Moving; Going to Riverdale," Replied Tommy, Proudly.

"Shall we?" asked Mrs. Tiptop of her husband, doubtfully.

"Oh, I guess it will be all right, if he isn't a bother."

"No bother at all," the head mover assured Mr. Tiptop. The man seemed to have taken a liking to Tommy. "I'll look after him," he went on. "The drive will do him good, and there's no hurry. He'll be safe."

"And there's no danger of him getting stepped on up there, either," went on the man with the big feet, who seemed to worry about treading on someone.

"Now for some fun!" cried Tommy as he caught up his ball and bat, which he had refused to allow to be packed with the other things. "I'll see you in Riverdale!" he called to his mother, father and sister, as the head driver helped him up to the high seat.

And then, holding his ball and bat firmly in his arms, Tommy waved his hands to those down below. The drivers called to their horses, the vans rumbled on, and Mr. and Mrs. Tiptop gave one last look toward the house that had been their home for so many years. Then they started for the trolley that was to take them to Riverdale.

"Do you play ball?" asked the head driver of Tommy, on the seat beside him.

"Yes, and I'm going to organize a nine in Riverdale."

"Good! I'll come to see you play. I used to like the game myself," and the man cracked his whip in the air.

So Tommy Tiptop moved away from Millton, and as he thought of the new home to which he was going he wondered whether he would have a good time there, and whether the boys would like baseball as much as he did.

CHAPTER III

TOMMY HAS AN ACCIDENT

"Now, be careful of yourself, Tommy," his mother stopped to call to him as he sat on the high seat of the moving van. "Don't fall off, and don't stop on the road. We'll be there ahead of you, and I'll try and have something ready to eat."

"All right, mother," replied Tommy, feeling that he was quite an important young man now. "I'll be careful."

"I'll look after him," promised the moving man.

"And nobody will step on him," added the helper—the one with the big feet.

Then Tommy was fairly started on his journey, and he looked down from the high seat, almost wishing that he was a van driver, instead of going to be merely a baseball player.

"Are you the captain?" asked the moving man, suddenly.

"Captain of what?" asked Tommy.

"Of the baseball nine."

"No, I haven't really got it started yet. You see, I don't know any of the boys in that place we're going to, but if I can get up a team, I may be manager or captain. I haven't decided yet."

"Oh," said the man, and then he laughed, and Tommy wondered why.

"They're a good team," said the man after a while.

"What team?" asked Tommy quickly.

"My horses," replied the moving man. "They can pull a heavy load."

"Oh, I thought you were speaking about a ball team," said Tommy. "Yes, they're nice horses."

Tommy was so busy thinking of the many things that had happened in the last few hours that he did not feel much like talking. It hardly seemed possible that it was only a short time ago that he had been playing ball with his boy friends, and now he was moving away. But it was true.

The van rumbled along the streets until it came to the open country, and then it was not so noisy, as the wheels rolled along on the soft dirt of the roads.

"Will we be there by dinner time?" asked Tommy, who wondered what one did about meals when it was moving day.

"Oh, yes, we'll easily be there by noon," replied the man; that is, if we don't have an accident."

"What kind of an accident?" asked Tommy.

"Oh, a wheel coming off the van, or a horse falling down, or something like that."

"Did you ever have any accidents?" asked Tommy.

"A few," replied the man. "I was a week once getting a load two miles."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, you see, we broke an axle, and we had a van filled with goods. The man who owned them was in no hurry, so we just left them in the wagon, jacked the front part up, put on a new axle, and in a week we started off again. The blacksmith was so busy, he couldn't make an axle in less than a week."

"And did you stay on the van all that while and have

nothing to eat?" asked Tommy, wondering what would happen if an accident like that should occur now.

"Bless your heart, no! I took the horses to a stable and I went home. When the axle was fixed, the blacksmith sent word to me, and I came and finished the moving. I couldn't go a week without eating, you know — nobody could."

"I guess that's right," admitted Tommy, and he felt a sort of gnawing pain in his stomach, as if he was even now getting hungry. And it was no wonder, for breakfast had been eaten very early that morning.

As the van swayed to and fro over the rather rough road, Tommy had to hold tightly to the sides of the seat, and with his ball and bat to look after this was not so easily done.

"You'd have done better to have put them in the van," said the moving man, looking at the baseball things.

"They might have got broken," said Tommy.

"Yes, they might," admitted the man.

They rode on for some miles. The sun climbed higher and higher in the sky, and it seemed to be about noon, and still the man did not say that they were near Riverdale. The other van—for there had been two of them—was out of sight now, having started off a little in advance of the one on which our young hero rode.

"What will we do if we don't get there in time for dinner?" asked Tommy after a while.

"Oh, we'll get there," said the man, confidently.

Just then the wagon went over a rather large stone, gave a lurch and swayed to one side.

"Look out!" cried the man, pulling on the reins sharply and making a grab for Tommy. The lad grasped the side of the seat with both hands to save himself from falling,

and to do this he had to let go of his ball and bat. They both slipped down, and the next instant there was the sound of splintering wood.

"Whoa!" cried the moving man, sharply. "What's that? Is something broken—a wheel?" He pulled in the horses, which had almost stopped of their own accord.

"It isn't a wheel," said Tommy. "It's my bat. A wheel ran over it, and it's broken."

"What, the wheel?" cried the man. "Don't tell me the wheel is broken!"

"No, it's my bat," answered Tommy, and he spoke sorrowfully, for he had saved up his spare change for some time to buy that bat, and he liked it very much.

"Oh, your bat!" exclaimed the man. "That's too bad! Wait, I'll get it for you, and maybe you can mend it."

"The ball, too," exclaimed Tommy. "That fell."

"Yes, I see the ball. That rolled to one side and isn't hurt a bit. But that bat—well, maybe you can put some wire on it," and the moving man handed the horse reins to Tommy.

"Do you want me to hold them?" asked the boy.

"Sure. They'll stand steady. Just hold the lines from slipping, and I'll get the bat for you."

Tommy Tiptop felt very proud as he sat there on the high seat, holding the reins of the four horses, and he looked over the side to watch the man pick up the ball and bat. The ball was found first, for that had merely rolled into the dust. Then the man called out:

"Too bad! The bat is broken in three pieces, and it isn't worth mending. Never mind. I think I've got an old bat at home, and the next time I'm in Riverdale I'll bring it to you."

"Will you, really?" asked Tommy, and he did not feel

so sorry now. The man climbed up to the high seat again, and, taking the reins, called to the horses. They stepped out slowly, for there was quite a hill in front of them, and they knew that it would be hard work getting up it.

"Well, if that's the only accident we have we'll be lucky," remarked the moving man as he cracked his whip. "This place is a little farther than I thought it was. I don't believe we're going to make it before one o'clock."

"Maybe they won't save any dinner for me," exclaimed Tommy.

"Oh, I guess they will. If they don't, you can have some of my lunch. I have a whole pail full, that my wife put up for me this morning, and there's more than I need. Don't worry."

They were at the foot of the hill now, and the horses settled themselves into the collars to pull the heavy van up the slope.

Suddenly there was a cracking sound, and the van gave a lurch. It settled down on one side, as though one of the wheels had gone into a hole.

"Look out!" yelled the man. He grabbed Tommy, and only just in time, or our hero would have fallen off. But Tommy had a glimpse of what had happened.

"It's the wheel this time!" he cried, as the horses came to a stop.

"What about it?" asked the man, as he got ready to go down.

"It came off, and it rolled over in the bushes. It isn't broken, but it came off."

"Just my luck!" cried the man. "Talk about accidents, and they're sure to happen. The nut came loose, and the wheel rolled off. Is the axle broken? I mean the black

piece of iron sticking out, that the wheel goes on. Is that broken?"

"No," reported Tommy, taking another look. "That's all right."

"Then it isn't so bad, if I can find the nut that holds the wheel on. We'll have to look for it. Wait now, I'll help you get down."

It was not easy to get off the high seat of the van, all tilted to one side as it was, but they managed it.

"Now, we'll see if we can find the nut," suggested the moving man, when he had looked at the axle and made sure that it was not broken. It had dug itself away down into the dirt of the road, though.

So Tommy and the man looked all around for the nut, but they could not find it. It had probably come off some time before the accident happened, and was lying far back in the road.

"I ought to have an extra nut," went on the man, as he poked about in the dust and bushes with a stick. "Now I'm in a pretty pickle!"

"Why, can't we go on to Riverdale?" asked Tommy.

"No, not a step. I've got to go to the nearest blacksmith shop and get a nut. We'll have to give the horses their dinners, and let them stay here in the shade," and the man went over and began unhitching the animals. Tommy noticed that there were nose-bags filled with hay and oats on the back of the van.

"The horses will have a good dinner and a rest," said the moving man.

"Yes," replied Tommy, slowly, "but what about you and me? I—I'm afraid I'm hungry!"

"Shouldn't blame you a bit," replied the moving man. "I am myself. But don't worry. I've got a big pail full

of lunch, and we'll have a regular picnic here—you and I —and then, after we eat, I'll go see if I can find a blacksmith shop and get a nut."

After putting the nose-bags on the horses' heads and tying the animals to a fence, in the shade of a big tree, the moving man got out a big tin dinner pail from under the van seat.

"Now we'll have a fine meal," he exclaimed. "My wife always puts me up a big lunch when I take moving loads out into the country. I know there are sandwiches and pie, and I'm pretty sure there are cookies. And in the top part of the pail there is, most likely, some rich milk. Oh, but we'll have a fine dinner, even if we did have an accident!"

So he opened the pail. Suddenly he looked into it, as though something was the matter. Then he poked his fingers down inside the tin.

"Why—what—what's the matter?" asked Tommy in wonder.

"Matter!" exclaimed the man. "Matter! Everything is the matter! There isn't a bit of lunch in the pail! Not a *crumb!* I must have taken the wrong pail this morning, for I have two. We haven't a thing to eat, Tommy Tiptop! Here are only two empty tin cups in the pail, and my knife and fork wrapped up in a napkin! My! This is too bad!

CHAPTER IV

TOMMY STARTS HIS NINE

FOR a few moments Tommy Tiptop just stood there, staring at the moving man. The moving man looked into the dinner pail again, as if possibly there might be something hidden in it which he had not at first seen. Tommy peered over and also looked into the pail.

"It isn't any use," said the moving man with a sigh. "There isn't a thing here—not a thing."

"Then we haven't anything to eat, have we?" asked Tommy, faintly.

"No," answered the man sadly, as he rattled the two cups in the pail. "That is, unless you can chew tin. I know I can't," he added, with a sigh.

"Me either," went on Tommy. Then he looked off across the fields toward a large, white farmhouse. Next he looked at the horses standing comfortably in the shade, eating their oats from the bags that hung on their heads.

"I wish——" began Tommy, and then the moving man interrupted him by saying:

"I do myself, young man. I wish I was a horse, for they are getting over being hungry, and I am getting hungrier all the while. Is that what you were going to say?"

"Well, I was," admitted Tommy, slowly. "I was just going to say that, and then I happened to think of something else to say."

"What?" inquired the moving man. "Has it got anything to do with something to eat?"

"Yes," said Tommy, slowly, "it has. I was thinking that perhaps if I went over to that house," and he pointed to a white one across the fields, "I might ask for something to eat. Then you could be looking for the nut to fasten the wheel on, or you could go to the blacksmith shop—that is, after I brought you back something to eat."

"The very thing!" exclaimed the man. "I wonder I didn't think of that myself."

"I could take the empty pail, and the cups," went on the boy, "and if they had milk, I could bring some of that with me. I could tell them I wasn't a tramp, you know, and, if they didn't believe me, I could point to this wagon, and tell them it had some of my father's things in it. Then I guess they'd give me some food. Anyhow, I can pay for it!" he added quickly, "for I have a quarter my mother gave me the other day."

"Oh, I guess they won't want pay," said the moving man. "Country folks aren't generally that way. And I'm sure they wouldn't take you for a tramp, even if they didn't see my moving wagon."

And that was very true, for Tommy was a very nice appearing boy, and now, though he did not have on his best suit, and though his clothes were a trifle dusty from having carried out chairs and other articles, still he looked very different from a tramp.

"I think it would be a good plan for you to go to the farmhouse," went on the moving man, after thinking over the matter. "Please tell them that you have a *man* friend, who is very hungry, or otherwise they might give you only enough for two *boys,* you see, and I can eat more than a boy can."

Tommy was sure this was true, for the moving man was big and strong, and he felt that if the man's appetite was anything like his own, it must be very good.

"I'll be sure to tell them that," said the baseball-loving boy, and then he started off across the fields with the empty dinner pail and the cups.

"I'll be looking back along the road for the nut of the wheel until you get back," the moving man called after him, and Tommy waved his hand to show that he understood.

It did not take him long to get to the farmhouse. He did not quite know whether to go to the front or the back door, and he had about made up his mind that, as he was begging for food, the back door would be the better place.

"Besides, it's nearer the kitchen," thought Tommy.

And then he happened to see a side door, and he decided that perhaps that would be better. He was just going up the steps when a dog, that he had not seen before, ran around the corner of the house, barking loudly.

Now, Tommy knew something about dogs, for he had once had one of his own, though it was only a puppy. And he remembered that his mother had often said to him that if a dog should come at him the best plan was to stand still, and not run, for in that case the dog would certainly run after him.

So Tommy boldly stood his ground, and then the dog, which had continued to bark all the while, stood still and looked at him.

"Good boy!" called Tommy, at the same time snapping his fingers. "Good old boy! What's the matter now, eh? You don't look as if you would bite!"

Then the dog began to wag its tail, and Tommy knew there was no more danger, for the animal was sniffing in a

friendly fashion at the boy's legs. He knocked on the door, and it was opened by a pleasant-faced lady.

"Oh!" she exclaimed at the sight of Tommy. "Did the dog bother you? Towser, behave yourself! I don't believe I want to buy anything to-day," she went on, looking from the dog to Tommy.

"If you please, I'm not selling anything," answered our hero. "I came to ask if I could have something to eat for the moving man and myself. He is very hungry and so am I, and, if you please, I was to specially remind you that he was a man, and I'm a boy."

He held out the empty pail.

"Bless and save us!" exclaimed the lady. "What in the world are you talking about, and who is the moving man?"

"Oh, I forgot to answer your other question," said Tommy. "No, ma'am, the dog didn't bother me. He made friends. But the moving man is over there, where you can see the wagon," and he pointed to it. "The horses are eating their dinner, but we haven't any, for the man picked up the wrong pail by mistake when he came to move us this morning. We're going to live in Riverdale, and the wheel came off our wagon." And then Tommy told all about the accident, how his bat had been broken, and how he hoped to start a baseball nine.

"Aren't you too young to play ball?" asked the lady.

"I'm ten, going on to eleven," proudly answered Tommy, "and I've been playing ball for nearly two years now. I'm going to be the captain," and then, thinking perhaps the lady might have forgotten about the food, he gently rattled the dinner pail.

"Oh!" she exclaimed with a laugh, "you want something to eat. Come in."

Talking while she got out food from the cupboard, and

asking questions about himself and his family, the lady soon had a nice lunch ready for Tommy to take back with him.

"I think the moving man will have enough, even for his big appetite," she said, "and I will put some milk in the top part of the pail. You can use the cups from which to drink. And, if you can't find the nut to hold the wheel on, perhaps there might be one in the barn that could be used. I know what it is to have your goods delayed, and your mamma will be worried if you don't soon get to the new house. Tell the moving man to look in our barn for a wheel nut."

"I will," promised Tommy, and thanked her for her kindness. And, after he had gotten back to the wagon, and he and his new friend had eaten the fine lunch which the lady had put in the pail, that is exactly what the moving man did. He found in the barn a nut that just fitted the wheel axle, and it is a good thing that he did, for it is very doubtful if he could have gotten the one that was lost. He also got a thing called a "jack" from the barn, for he had to have this to lift up the wagon, so the wheel could be slipped on the axle.

"There, I guess we're ready to go on now," said the man as he tightened the nut. "We've only lost about an hour."

Off they started, and Tommy was very glad, for he was afraid that his mother would worry. And, had he only known it, Mrs. Tiptop *was* very much alarmed when, after she and her husband and daughter had arrived at the new house, and had waited for some time, Tommy did not come. The other wagon-load of goods got there, and the driver of it said he had not seen the vehicle on which Tommy had started to ride to Riverdale; that is, not since it had started.

"Oh, I'm sure some accident has happened!" exclaimed Mrs. Tiptop. "Oh, this is dreadful!"

"Don't worry," advised her husband. "That was a very heavy load of goods, and perhaps the horses had to go slowly up the hills. If it doesn't come soon, I'll get a carriage and drive back along the road. But I'm sure it will come. Now we must see to getting the things put into the house from the wagon that is here."

And it wasn't very long after that before the delayed wagon, with Tommy up on the high seat, came rumbling along, and there was no further need of worrying.

"What in the world happened?" called Mrs. Tiptop, and Tommy told her everything, even to how he had made friends with the barking dog.

"But I'm sorry about my bat," he added. "I may want to play ball this afternoon, and I haven't a bat!"

"I guess you won't have much chance to play ball this afternoon," replied his father with a laugh. "But here, Tommy, is a quarter. You can go buy a new bat, and don't get lost, for you don't know the streets of this town yet."

"A quarter bat! That's fine!" exclaimed the lad. "The one that got run over was only a fifteen-cent one. Say, now I will have a good ball team!" And he hurried off to find a store where baseball goods were kept.

It was when he was going along the street, swinging the bat around in the air, and wondering how far he could knock a ball with it, that Tommy saw two boys, of about his own age, walking slowly ahead of him.

"I wonder who they are?" he mused. "I'd like to know them. Maybe they play ball. School must be out," he added, as he saw some books slung in a strap across the shoulder of one boy. "I'm going to speak to them," Tommy went on. "I'll get to know them in school, anyhow, and I might as well begin now."

So he hurried along, until he had caught up to the boys, and then he exclaimed:

"Say, do you play ball?"

"Play ball?" repeated the taller of the two, looking curiously at Tommy. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'm a new boy. I've just moved here. I want to get up a ball nine. My name is Tommy Tiptop. I just got this new bat. My old one was run over by the moving wagon. Don't you fellows want to be on my nine?"

"Your nine?" asked the other boy, who had very black and snapping eyes. "Since when have you had a nine?"

"I'm just getting up one," went on Tommy. "I thought maybe you would like to join. Do you belong to one now?"

"No, neither of us do," put in the boy who had spoken first. "My name is Teddy Bunker," he added in more friendly tones.

"And mine is Billie Ruggler," said his companion. "Let's see the bat."

Tommy handed it over, and both his newly made acquaintances tested it, tapping it on the pavement and swinging it in the air.

"It's a good one, all right," was Billie's opinion.

"A dandy!" agreed Teddy.

"It cost a quarter," spoke Tommy, proudly. "Say, now, will you join a nine if I get one up? I'm sure I can."

"Why, yes, I'd like to belong," answered Teddy, slowly.

"So would I," came from Billie. "I can't play very good, though."

"Oh, we'll have to have practice," agreed Tommy. "And maybe the fellows from Millton, where we moved from, will come over and play us some day."

"Where can we play?" asked Billie. "There's only one ball field in town, and the big fellows use that. They never allow us on it."

"Oh, we'll have a diamond of our own," declared Tommy. "We can fix up some vacant lot. Anything will do for a start. I guess some man will let us play in his lot, and maybe we can get enough money for a back-stop and uniforms. That would be dandy!"

"Where'd we get the money?" asked Teddy.

"Earn it," came quickly from Tommy. "Cut grass, run errands, and things like that. We can do it! Say, do you know any other fellows we can get to join the nine? We need six more."

"Yes, I guess we can find some," answered Teddy, and then, as another lad came suddenly around the corner of the street—a lad taller and stronger than either of the three—Billie interrupted by calling:

"Look out, here comes Jakie Norton!"

Before Tommy could ask who Jakie was, and why his two companions seemed to be afraid of the newcomer, for they certainly acted as though they disliked him, Jakie strode up to him and roughly took the bat out of his hands.

"Let's see that," spoke the tall lad in rather surly tones. "Humph! A new one, eh?" and he tapped it sharply on the pavement. "Say, what does a little chap like you want of a bat like this? It's too good! Guess I'll take it," and then, tucking the new bat under his arm, Jakie hurried off.

"Say, that's mean!" exclaimed Teddy in a low voice.

"He's always doing things like that," added Billie. "Once he took all my marbles."

Tommy was so surprised for a moment that he did not know what to do. He thought it was only a joke, and that Jakie would soon return with the bat and laugh with them.

Jakie Strode Up to Him and Roughly Took the Bat Out of His Hands.

But the big boy seemed to have no such intention. Then Tommy started after him.

"Where are you going?" asked Teddy.

"I'm going to get my bat!"

"Don't interfere with Jakie," advised Billie. "He's real mean, and he's a bad fighter. Better let him go."

"Let him go? With my new bat? Not much!" exclaimed Tommy. "I'm going to take it away from him." And he set off on the run, while his two new friends looked after him with wonder, fear and admiration on their faces.

CHAPTER V

TOMMY MAKES A RUN

"SAY, that new boy has nerve!" exclaimed Teddy, admiringly.

"Yes," began Billie, "but if Jakie gets mad, he'll hit him, and——"

By this time Tommy had nearly caught up to the boy who had his bat, and Jakie, wondering at the footsteps behind him, turned around. Billie was so interested in what he feared was going to happen, that he did not finish the sentence he had started.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Jakie, sneeringly, as he faced our hero.

"My bat, and I'm going to have it, too!" exclaimed Tommy, determinedly.

"Go on away, and don't bother me! You're too little for a bat. I'm going to keep this one, and I may let you play with it sometimes."

Jakie turned and was about to walk off, but, to his surprise, as well as to the wonder of Teddy and Billie, Tommy stepped directly in front of the bully, who was head and shoulders taller than he.

"That's my bat, and I'm going to have it!" exclaimed Tommy, sharply. "You can't play that kind of a trick on me, if I have just moved to town! If you don't give me that bat right away, I'll find out where you live, and my father will come and see your father about it."

"Don't worry me!" sneered the bully. "I'm going to keep the bat. Run along now!"

"I will not!" cried Tommy, and then, with such a quick motion that there was no chance to stop him, he snatched the bat from under the bully's arm. Then, instead of running away, as many boys would have done under the circumstances, Tommy stood facing the other lad.

"Well, you *have* got nerve!" exclaimed Jakie. "I've a good notion to punch your head!"

"Don't you dare touch me!" said Tommy, quietly, and there was something in his voice that made the other hesitate. "You had no right to take my bat. I said I'd get it back, and I did, and I want you to let me alone. I'm not a bit afraid of you!"

Tommy had a firm grip on his bat, and, though his heart was beating rather fast, he made up his mind that he would fight with all his strength to retain his property.

"Say, he's all right!" exclaimed Teddy, admiringly. "Let's go help him. I like a fellow that does things!"

"So do I!" agreed Billie. "The three of us ought to be able to stand up to that mean Jakie."

"Of course we can! Come on," and the two started on the run toward Tommy and his enemy. Tommy heard them coming, but did not turn his head to look at them. He was eyeing the bully, ready for anything that might happen. Jakie saw Teddy and Billie approaching, and he also saw that they meant to do something. He realized that he would be no match for three determined boys, even if he was taller and stronger than any one of them.

Besides, Tommy looked as if he could give a pretty good account of himself alone, and he had a stout ash bat in his hands that would be an effective weapon in an encounter.

"I was only fooling," said Jakie finally, laughing a bit, but he did not seem in a very jolly mood. "I'd have given your bat back, after a bit."

"I'd have got it back, anyhow," retorted Tommy, "and I've got it now. If you bother me again, I'll tell your father on you."

"That's right," added Teddy, coming up just then. "We are going to stick up for him, too!"

"Say, you think you're a regular team, don't you?" sneered Jakie. "Don't give me any of your back talk! I'll fix you fellows some day, if you don't look out." He spoke the last roughly.

"Huh! You started this!" came from Billie.

"Yes, he acts as though we did something," added Tommy. And then, having gained all that he needed, our hero turned away, his two chums joining him on either side.

"Say, you're all right!" exclaimed Billie, clapping Tommy on the back.

"Weren't you afraid?" asked Teddy, when they were out of Jakie's hearing.

"Yes, I was," admitted Tommy, slowly, "but I wasn't going to let him know it. Does he often do things like that?"

"Lots of times," declared Teddy. "He's one of the meanest boys in town."

"Then we won't ask him to join our nine," said Tommy. "Say, can't you fellows come down to my house?"

"Where do you live?" asked Billie.

"I don't know the name of the street, but it's a big yellow house, and there's a yard in front. There's a drug store on the corner."

"Oh, that's Wickerham Street," said Teddy. "I know the house you mean."

"Yes, the Perkins family used to live there," went on Billie. "But I can't come now. I have to go home first."

"So do I," added his companion.

"Well, come over when you can," invited Tommy, "and we'll talk about baseball."

The boys promised, and Tommy hastened home to get a ball and practice with his new bat. The things were nearly all moved into the house by now, and Tommy thought to help by carrying in a few small articles left on the sidewalk. The movers were preparing to leave.

"There he is again!" exclaimed the man with the big feet. "Say, youngster, would you mind keeping out of my way?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Don't you want me to help?" inquired Tommy.

"No, I'd rather not. You see, I haven't had any accidents to-day, and I don't want one to happen at the last minute. I might step on you, you see. I wouldn't want to, of course, but look there," and the man held up one of his big feet.

"It's big, and I'm heavy," he went on, "and when I *do* step on anything, I just naturally squash it! Can't seem to help it," he added. "Now, I haven't stepped on anybody during this moving, and I don't want to. So, if it's just the same to you, I'd rather you wouldn't get in the way. It's hard to look where I'm stepping when I'm carrying things in front of me, and I surely wouldn't step on you on purpose, but—well, look out! You'd better trot along and play ball until I get out of the way."

"All right," agreed Tommy, with a laugh. "I'll go in the house and see if I can help my mother."

He found both his mother and father very busy, and a woman had been hired to come in and help, so that Tommy's aid was not needed.

"Go out and play," advised his father, "but stay within call. I'll want you to go to the store and get something for supper pretty soon. Nellie, you go out and play, too."

"No, I'm going up to my room," said Tommy's sister. "Oh, I've got the loveliest room!" she went on to her brother. "I can see away over the fields to the school. At least, it looks like a school."

"Where's my room?" demanded Tommy, thinking of the apartment for the first time. "Have I got a good one?"

"You can have your choice of two," put in his mother. "There is a small one on the second floor, or a big one in the attic, and——"

"I want the one in the attic!" said Tommy, quickly. "I'm going to make a den of it, and sometimes can I have the boys up there?"

"Boys? Have you met some boys already?" asked his father, with a laugh.

"Sure. Billie Ruggler and Teddy Bunker. They're going to belong to my nine. Here they come now!" suddenly exclaimed Tommy, glancing through the window. "And they've got another fellow with them. I'm going to have a catch, anyhow, if we can't play a regular game," and then, forgetting all about his new room, Tommy hurried out to meet his new friends.

"This is Herbert Kress," said Billie, introducing their companion. "This is the fellow I was telling you about," he went on, pointing at Tommy. "He took his bat away from Jakie Norton, and Jakie didn't dare grab it back."

"If he'd tried it, he'd have had a lively tussle with all of us," predicted Teddy. "We were ready for him."

"Come on and have a catch," proposed Tommy. "Will you join our new nine?" he asked of Herbert.

"Sure. I'll be glad to, but I don't know much about the game. We boys never had a team before."

"Then it's time you did!" declared Tommy, with a laugh. "I'll start one. We'll have some fun. Know any other fellows who'll join?"

"I guess so," replied Teddy, while Herbert said in a low voice to Billie:

"Say, this Tommy Tiptop certainly does things, doesn't he?"

"Yes; I'm glad he moved to town," replied Billie, eagerly.

"There's Joie Grubb!" called Teddy, as the boys stood in Tommy's front yard. A very fat boy was walking slowly on the other side of the street.

"Does he play ball?" asked Tommy, quickly. "Call him over."

"Hey, Joie!" shouted Billie. "Come on over and meet a new fellow. We're going to have a ball nine."

Joie came over slowly and was introduced to Tommy.

"Do—do you mind if I sit down?" asked Joie, wiping his fat face with his handkerchief. "It's getting hot."

"Good baseball weather," commented Tommy. "Do you play?"

"No. I'm too fat, I guess. Anyhow, that's what Jakie Norton said."

"It'll do you good to play ball," advised Tommy. "You won't be so fat, then."

"Say, you ought to see what happened to Jakie Norton to-day," spoke Billie. And he told of the trouble about the bat.

"Oh, say, if we're going to play, come on," begged Tommy. "There are five of us, and we can play 'two-o'-cat,' with two batters, a catcher and a pitcher, and one fel-

low to chase the balls. We'll draw lots to see who does the chasing, who pitches and who catches."

"That's the way to do it!" declared Joie. "I hope I don't have to do any chasing," he added, with a laugh. Tommy liked Joie from the start—in fact, most boys did—for he was jolly and good-natured, and he didn't in the least mind being called "Fatty."

Luckily for himself, Joie was one of the batters. Tommy took a number of blades of grass in his hand and let the other boys draw them. The one who got the shortest was to be the runner, and the one who had the next in size the catcher, then the pitcher, and then those who had the two longest blades were to be at bat first. Joie and Teddy were the first batters.

Next to the house into which Tommy's parents had moved was a vacant lot, and it was there that the boys went to play ball. Stones served for bases, and the rear fence was the back-stop.

It was a simple game that the boys played, with only one base to run to, and there were hardly any rules. If the batter knocked a fly, and it was caught, he was out, while if he missed hitting two of the balls that were tossed to him, he was also out.

They had a good time, and soon it was Tommy's turn to bat.

"Here's where I get a home run!" he cried as he stood up to home plate, a round piece of red sandstone. "Give me a good ball, Joie," for the fat boy had been advanced to pitcher, after having gotten out on an easy fly ball that only popped up a little way into the air.

The ball came slowly toward him, and Tommy swung his new bat at it with all his strength. Away the ball went,

sailing high over the head of Teddy Bunker, who was doing the running.

"Come on!" cried Billie, who, with Tommy, made up the batting force. "Make a home run!"

"Sure!" shouted Tommy, as he raced for the stone that marked the first and only base.

He reached it safely, touched it with his foot and then started back for home plate. Just as he got there, and while Billie was capering about in delight, there came a crash of glass.

"Oh, my! Good night!" shouted Joie.

"What's the matter?" asked Tommy.

"We've broken a window in your house," said the fat pitcher. And this was but too true. Teddy Bunker had thrown the ball to home with such force that it went over the fence and crashed through the glass of one of the parlor windows of the house into which Tommy had just moved.

CHAPTER VI

TOMMY UPSETS A BULL

AFTER the crash of the glass there came silence. The boys were waiting for something to happen. They knew what always followed the breaking of a window on the few occasions when such a calamity had occurred.

"I—I didn't mean to do that!" exclaimed Teddy, sorrowfully.

"Of course not!" agreed Tommy, quickly.

Mrs. Tiptop looked out of the door at that moment.

"Who did that, Tommy?" she asked, gently.

"We did, mother. It was an accident. I made a home run, and Teddy was throwing, to try and get me out. Is it badly broken?"

"Well, it couldn't be *much* worse," she replied, with a queer little smile. "But, then, I'm glad no one was hurt. You boys will have to be more careful, though. Can't you find some place to play that isn't so close to the house?"

"We're going to, as soon as we can get our nine made up," answered Tommy, eagerly, glad that his mother was not angry.

"Say, we'll pay for that window," said Teddy in a hoarse whisper. "We'll chip in and——"

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Tommy, quickly. "Mom won't mind. Something always happens when you move, anyhow, and I know she'll be gladder of this than if a

looking-glass was broken. You don't want us to pay for that, do you, momsey?" he called.

"Oh, no, of course not, dear," she answered. "It couldn't be helped. But please be more careful next time. I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to go to the store now, Tommy, and get something for supper," she added.

"We'll go with you!" put in Joie, eagerly. "We don't mind stopping the game. Anyhow, I'm tired, and it's still hot."

"Sure we'll stop," agreed Teddy. "But I think we ought to pay for that window."

"No," said Tommy, firmly. "Mother knows what's right."

"Say, she's *all right,* your mother is!" exclaimed Herbert Kress. "I remember once we broke a window in Mrs. Delafield's house, and I had to save up for two weeks to pay my share. And there was a circus coming to town, too. I didn't go."

"Well, I guess we'll have to look for some other place to play," decided Tommy. "Do you fellows mind coming to the store with me? I don't know much about the town yet."

"Sure we'll come," declared Billie.

"Glad of the chance," added Teddy.

"You had better stop at the glass-man's, and ask him to come and put in a new window pane," suggested Mrs. Tiptop, when she gave Tommy the money to get some groceries. "It won't matter much to-night, as it isn't cold, and I can paste a paper over the broken pane."

"I'll do it when I come back," offered Tommy.

On the way to the store the boys talked excitedly of many things, from the accident that had happened on the

moving wagon, and about which Tommy told them, to the breaking of the window.

"We want about four more fellows to make up the nine," said Tommy. "Can't you ask them to come around to-morrow? We can meet at my house. I guess I won't go to school until the first of next week, and that will give me time to get this ball nine in shape."

"Are you really going to have one?" asked Herbert.

"Certainly I am. All of us fellows here will be on it," and Tommy looked at his four new chums.

"I guess Mortimer Manchester would join," said Teddy.

"And Frank Bonder," added Billie.

"George Pennington is a good player," suggested Teddy, "and I guess Sammie Sandlass will join."

"He's the boy with red hair that lives on Parker Street, isn't he?" asked Herbert.

"Yes, and he's got a new baseball."

"Then we want him," decided Tommy, quickly. "We'll need a good ball, and we've got one bat, the one I just bought. It will take quite a while to get an outfit, but I guess we can do it."

"Where can we play, though?" asked Joie Grubb, doubtfully, as he puffed along with the others.

"What's the matter with Mr. Bashford's lot?" suddenly asked Teddy. "It's plenty big enough, and it's good and level. I'm sure he'd let us use it if we asked him."

"It's too far out," said Billie.

"It only takes about ten minutes to get there, and we wouldn't break any windows," went on Teddy.

"Where is it?" asked Tommy, and the others told him how to get to the lot by following the main street out to the old flour mill, and then turning down a country lane.

"I'll go look at it to-morrow," decided our hero, "and I'll ask Mr. Bashford if we can use it."

"Say, it takes you to do things!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Oh, I like to keep busy," declared Tommy; and then the lads talked more baseball, until they reached the grocery. On the way they passed the now empty moving vans which had brought the Tiptop goods to town. The man on the one on which Tommy had ridden waved his hand to the lad, and the man with the big feet, who was on the other wagon, shouted:

"It's all right, youngster. I didn't step on anybody to-day, and I'm mighty glad of it, 'cause when I do step I generally squashes something. Good-by!"

"Good-by," answered Tommy, with a laugh.

The household arrangements were rather upset for the Tiptops that night, as they always are the first day of a moving. But Mrs. Tiptop managed to get a good supper, and all went to bed early. Tommy was delighted with his room in the attic, and he fell asleep thinking of how he could decorate it, and have a boys' club meet there.

"Will you need me, mother?" he asked the next morning. "Can I help you settle?"

"No; you might as well run out and play," she answered. "I might step on you if you were around," she added, with a laugh, as she imitated the voice of the moving man with the big feet. "Nellie will help me," she added, "and I have a scrub-woman coming in. Where are you going?"

"To see Mr. Bashford, and ask him if we can use his lot for the ball nine."

"Well, don't be late for dinner. Your papa comes home at twelve. He said he'd see about sending you to school on Monday. You had better stop at that glass-man's on your

way, and tell him to please be sure and send somebody to fix the broken window to-day."

"I will, and after this there won't be any danger. We are going to play a good ways off from houses."

"Perhaps you can't get the lot."

"Oh, I think I can."

It did not take Tommy long to get to the Bashford meadow.

"Say, that will be fine!" he exclaimed to himself. "If we can only get money enough to put up a back-stop, and buy some more bats and balls, we'll have a dandy baseball nine. Guess I'll go over in the field and see where would be a good place for home plate. Mr. Bashford won't mind, I think," for he had not yet seen the owner of the lot.

Tommy was pacing about in the big field, trying to decide which would be the best way to lay out the diamond, when he heard a scream behind him—a scream in a girl's shrill voice.

Turning quickly, he saw a big black bull, that had evidently leaped over the fence of an adjoining field, rushing toward a small girl wearing a red dress. She stood still, close to the fence.

"He'll horn her, sure!" gasped Tommy, as the girl screamed again. The bull let out a bellow of rage and came on faster than before.

"I've got to do something!" decided Tommy, quickly. Then he saw where there were several loose rails of the fence. He ran over, grabbed up one of the lightest of the sticks, and then raced to get between the bull and the little girl. She was too frightened to run, and stood there, crying and screaming, awaiting the rush of the maddened animal, who was snorting and bellowing, made frenzied by the sight of the scarlet cloth of her dress.

Heels Over Head Went the Maddened Animal.

"Run! Run!" cried Tommy. "Don't stand there! Run and crawl under the fence!"

The girl did not seem to hear, or else she did not dare move. Tommy raced on, scarcely knowing what he was going to do.

A moment later he was in front of the girl, and was bravely facing the bull that, with a snort of rage, had stood still, to eye the new foe that had so suddenly appeared before him.

"Run and get under the fence!" cried Tommy again. "I'll stop him from hurting you."

He held the fence rail in readiness.

"Oh! oh!" gasped the girl. "I'm—I'm so afraid. You —you——"

"Never mind me!" interrupted Tommy. "Run, I tell you! Run! Crawl under the fence!"

The girl turned and raced for safety. In a moment she was in the other field. Then, as though angered at losing a chance to toss the creature who wore the red dress, the animal came on for Tommy. The lad hardly knew what to do, for he realized that, even with the stick, he could not hope to stop the rush of the brute.

Then, from somewhere behind him, Tommy heard a man's hoarse voice crying:

"Look out, youngster! That's a mad bull! Run for your life! Throw that stick at him and run! You can get to the fence first. Run!"

Tommy did not turn to see who was speaking to him. The bull was now very close, and, taking the advice of the man, Tommy threw the stick with all his force.

He was just turning to run, when he noticed that the fence rail had gone right between the front legs of the bull, and an instant later, as the animal suddenly rushed forward,

it tripped and fell heavily, the long stick completely upsetting it.

Heels over head went the maddened animal, rolling toward the boy, but Tommy did not stay longer. With a jump he made for the fence, and he reached it, crawling under before the bull could regain its feet and take after him.

CHAPTER VII

TOMMY GOES SWIMMING

"WELL, youngster, you are a smart one! To think you upset the bull that way!" exclaimed the man who had called to Tommy, and who now stood near him on the other side of the fence under which Tommy had crawled to get out of the way of the angry animal.

The little girl with the red dress was also safe, and she stood beside the man, crying a little and trembling, for she had been very much frightened.

Tommy himself did not quite know what had happened, but he remembered that he had thrown the rail at the bull, and that the animal had fallen down, and then the lad had run as fast as he could for the fence.

"Not hurt a bit, are you?" asked the man, anxiously.

The bull was bellowing away and pawing the ground near the fence.

"No," answered Tommy, "not a bit. Is the bull hurt?"

"It would serve him good and right if he was," replied the man. "He's been awful ugly lately, and I don't know what to do with him. He jumps nearly all the fences. I never thought he would get in that field, though. What were you doing there?" he asked, turning to the little girl, who had stopped crying.

"I took a short cut across lots to get home," she answered, "and I didn't notice the bull until he was close to

me. Then I—I couldn't seem to run, until this boy got in front of me."

"Yes, it was a brave thing to do," said the man, as he looked at Tommy. "How did you think to throw that rail between his legs and trip him up?" he asked.

"I didn't think," replied Tommy. "It just—just happened!"

"And it's a good thing it did," went on the man. He looked toward the bull, who was pawing up the dirt, stamping his feet and shaking his big head with the ugly-looking horns on, while, from time to time, he gave forth a low bellow. "I'll send a couple of hired men and have him chained up in the stable. I can't allow him in the fields any more," he added.

"Oh, is he your bull?" asked Tommy in surprise.

"Yes," answered the man.

"Then you must be Mr. Bashford," spoke the boy. "Is this your lot? I'm glad I didn't hurt the bull."

"It would not do him any harm to be hurt some," declared the man. "He's too ugly. I guess I'll sell him. Yes, I'm Mr. Bashford."

"Then you're just the man I want to see!" exclaimed Tommy. "We boys would like to have this lot for a ball field. Would you let us take it—or—or—hire it to us?" he added, though he did not know where the money was to come from to pay for it.

"Have my lot for a ball field!" exclaimed Mr. Bashford, thoughtfully. "Why, we've got one ball team in town now. Is this a new one?"

"Yes," replied Tommy, "it's *my* team. I'm going to have a nine of boys about my size, only we can't get any place to play. I came down to-day to look at this lot, and then I heard this little girl scream, and——"

"Oh, I'm *so* glad you made that bull turn a somersault!" exclaimed the girl. "He was mean to me!"

"Yes, you want to be careful how you cross the lots, Sallie," said Mr. Bashford. "Run along home now."

"All right," she answered. "My name is Sallie Grubb," she went on to Tommy.

"Are you Joie Grubb's sister?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "and I know who you are. Joie told me about you. You're the new boy who's going to have a ball nine."

"I am, if we can get a lot to play in," replied our hero, looking at the farmer and smiling.

"Humph!" exclaimed Mr. Bashford. "I guess after what you did to-day I'll have to let you use the lot. What's your name?"

Tommy told him, adding something about how he had just moved to town, and how he wanted to start a ball nine.

"Well, you can use the lot," said Mr. Bashford finally, "and I guess I'll have to lock my bull up. Yes, bellow away, old fellow!" he called to the animal. "You won't get a chance to chase little girls much longer. Tell the boys they can play here all summer," went on the farmer. "In the fall I may plow up this field, but I won't do anything with it right away."

"How much rent?" asked Tommy, anxiously.

"Rent? Not a cent!" said Mr. Bashford, with a laugh. "I'll be glad to see another nine in town. I like baseball. You can play here free."

Tommy was delighted to hear this, for if they did not have to pay anything for the use of the lot there would be so much more money to build a back-stop and get balls, bats and gloves.

"Maybe we can even get uniforms!" thought the boy

eagerly, as he looked at the big lot where he intended to lay out a diamond. "If we could, we'd be a regular nine, and could play other teams."

"Well, I'm going to get some of my men and have that bull locked up," went on Mr. Bashford. "You children had better run along home now, or he may get loose again. He's very bad at jumping fences."

"Are you afraid to go home?" asked Tommy of Saliie Grubb.

"Not—not very much," she replied, hesitatingly.

"I'll go with you, anyhow," he volunteered, "though there isn't any more danger."

"Not if you don't cross the fields," put in Mr. Bashford. "Well, you can use the lot any time you want to," and Tommy, after thanking him, walked away with Sallie, while the bull continued to paw the earth and bellow in anger.

Sallie, when she reached home, gave such an account of the way that Tommy had made the bull turn head over heels that Mrs. Grubb got the idea that Tommy was quite a remarkable boy, indeed, whereas the truth was that he was just like other boys. But when he saw a thing needed doing he did it, and that as soon as he could.

"I do hope you help my Joie to get thinner," said Mrs. Grubb, when she had heard about the proposed ball nine. "He is too fat, altogether."

"If he plays ball enough he'll get thin," said Tommy, with a smile.

The boys were delighted when they heard of Tommy's success in getting permission to use the lot, and at once baseball activity began in earnest.

Several of the boys whom Teddy, Billie and Tommy's other new friends had mentioned agreed to join, and,

though there was no regular team as yet, it looked as if there would be one in a short time.

Tommy planned to hold a meeting and see if he could not raise some money, so they could buy more bats, balls, gloves and other things needed to play the game.

The first thing they did was to start work on their new diamond in Mr. Bashford's field. It was cleared of the bigger stones, and a large flat one was picked out for home plate. Then Tommy got some barrel-heads from his cellar, nailed them together, and staked them to the ground to use for bases — first, second and third. Next, a place for the pitcher to stand was dug out, the base lines were marked by taking a hoe and cutting out some of the sod, and then the place began to look like a real diamond, though it was rather small, for the boys could not run the full length of regular bases.

"If we only had a back-stop!" exclaimed Tommy regretfully one day after school, when he and several others of his new friends were working on the field. "That's what we need most now."

"Can't we build one ourselves?" asked Teddy.

"If we had the boards we might, but lumber costs money, and we haven't hardly any left," was Tommy's reply.

I might explain that each of the boys had a little pocket money, and most of this was turned into a general fund. With it they bought some gloves, two new balls and a few bats.

"But that's all we can stand now," said Tommy. "If we can earn more money we'll have a back-stop, and I guess we can. It will soon be summer, and lots of people will want their grass cut. We fellows can do it, I think. We can use our lawn mower, and before long we may have

enough cash to get suits all around. But we'll play without them at first."

"Who are we going to play?" asked Joie.

"Any team our size. I'll send out some challenges," said Tommy. "Maybe the team from Millton will come here. And we'll play any scrub team that wants to."

"What you going to call our team?" inquired Teddy.

"Oh, we'll have a meeting and decide on a name," replied the lad who was doing more than anyone else to get the boys into a ball nine. "The thing to do now is to get the ground in shape."

There had been several talks among the lads, who met in each other's houses or in Tommy's attic room, which he had fitted up with many of his own treasures, so that it looked a little like a "den," as he had heard some older boys call their apartment.

The Tiptop house had been pretty well settled by this time. Tommy and Nellie had started to school, and they had made many new friends. Tommy several times saw the lad who had taken his bat, but the bully did not even speak to our hero, and Tommy was glad enough to let Jakie alone.

"Well, as soon as we clean out the third base line, I guess we'll stop," suggested Tommy one afternoon, when they had done considerable work on the diamond. "My! but it's hot, though!"

"I should say so!" exclaimed Joie Grubb. "I wonder if it isn't warm enough to go in swimming?"

"Of course it is!" agreed Mortimer Manchester. "Let's go down to the old swimming hole by the buttonball tree. I was in the other day, and it wasn't as warm as it is now."

"Come on!" cried the boys in a chorus, and soon Tommy and the others, stopping work on the baseball diamond,

were hurrying toward the old swimming hole. Within a few minutes they were in the water, splashing about, diving off a spring-board, swimming across the hole under water, leaping over and ducking each other and having a general good time.

It was quite warm, and the water was not a bit chilly, so they stayed in for some time.

"Well, I'm going out," finally announced Tommy. "Can you fellows come over to my house this evening, and we'll see about having a meeting, getting a captain, manager and things like that? We want to arrange about playing other nines, too."

Several of the boys promised to come, though some had to stay at home and study, and, while busily thinking of how he could manage to raise money for uniforms, Tommy scrambled out of the water and ran toward the place where he had left his clothes.

"Hello!" he suddenly exclaimed. "This is queer!"

"What's the matter?" asked Billie. "Did somebody tie your clothes in knots?"

"I should say they had!" exclaimed Tommy, "and hard knots, too! Look at the legs of my pants! I'll never get them out, and my shirt and coat, too! And where are my shoes?"

The other boys aided him in looking around in the grass for them. But though the shoes of everyone else but Tommy Tiptop were there, his had disappeared.

"Guess I'll have to go home barefoot," he remarked, ruefully, "and my mother won't like it. Those shoes were almost new."

CHAPTER VIII

TOMMY EARNS SOME MONEY

"HERE, we'll help you untie the knots in your clothing," offered Teddy. "And maybe we can find your shoes, if we look a little more."

"I surely hope we can," spoke Tommy, who had managed to get his shirt on. "I don't see who could have done this."

"Oh, someone sneaked up when we weren't looking," was the opinion of Herbert Kress.

"Yes, and I believe I know who it was!" suddenly exclaimed Billie Ruggler. "It was that Jakie Norton. He did it to get even with Tommy for taking the bat away from him that time."

"I believe you're right," agreed Teddy. "If we had Jakie here now, there's enough of us to duck him! How about it?"

"Sure we would!" came in a chorus from the other lads. They had succeeded by this time in getting most of the knots out of Tommy's clothes, and now, as the boys were nearly all dressed, they began a more careful search for the missing shoes.

"Here they are!" suddenly called Mortimer Manchester, who had gone some distance back from the brook. "They're in this old stump, and they're filled with sand and gravel. That was a mean trick, all right!"

"It sure was!" agreed the other boys, while Tommy

hurried over to claim his footwear. The shoes were filled to the top with the wet material from the banks of the stream, and even when they were emptied they were damp and hard to put on.

"But it's better than not finding them at all," observed Tommy. "I can manage to squeeze my feet into 'em," which he did.

"I don't see how Jakie Norton—if it was him that did it—could sneak up and we not see him," observed Joie Grubb.

"He probably did it when we were splashing each other in the water and making a lot of noise," was the opinion of Georgie Pennington. "He might have grabbed up Tommy's clothes, hid back in the bushes until he had the knots in 'em, and then he tossed 'em over here. He took the shoes farther off with him."

This was about the only way the boys could figure out that the trick had been played, and, as they walked toward the town, they talked over what they would like to do to the bully if they could catch him while they were all together. Alone, none of them would have been strong enough to engage in a tussle with Jakie.

It was rather an unpleasant ending to the day's fun, but it might have been much worse, as Tommy said, if he had not found his shoes.

"Well, how is the baseball nine coming on?" asked Tommy's father of him one evening about a week after the swimming fun just mentioned. "Have you challenged any other teams yet?"

"No, but I expect to soon. We had a meeting up in my room, and I'm captain of the nine."

"I should think you would be, you got it up all alone," said Nellie. "Don't you own the nine, Tommy?"

"Of course not, and, just because a fellow gets up a nine, that doesn't say he is going to be captain. The captain has to be the best player," explained the lad. "Of course I don't say I *am* the best," he hastened to add, "but the fellows said I was good, and they hadn't ever had a nine before, so that's why they wanted me to be captain."

"But when are you going to play games, Tommy?" asked his mother.

"Oh, pretty soon now. We've got the grounds nearly fixed, and we've had a lot of practice. We've got to build a back-stop next, and the catcher needs a mask. We've got enough balls and bats and a few gloves," he went on. "Some of the fellows took a pair of their father's old gloves, cut off the finger-tops and stuffed the inside with cotton. I wish I had an old pair to fix up."

"I guess I can find some," said Mr. Tiptop.

"I don't s'pose you could lend the team enough money to get boards for a back-stop, could you, pa?" asked Tommy, wistfully.

"I'm afraid not," was the answer. "You see, it cost me quite a bit to move here, Tommy, and I can't afford to let you have any more than I allow you every week. But why can't you boys earn money yourselves?"

"There doesn't seem to be many ways of earning money here," replied the lad. "Back in Millton, now, I could make a lot cutting grass. But they don't have many front lawns here, and people let the grass grow as long as it likes in the back yards. I asked a lady, two or three houses down from here, the other day, if she didn't want her back grass cut, and she said it didn't matter because no one saw it, anyhow. I'll cut our front grass for fifteen cents," went on Tommy, quickly, looking at his father.

"All right," agreed Mr. Tiptop. "I'll pay you to-

morrow. And, if I were you, I'd go downtown after school, some days, and see if you can run errands for any of the storekeepers. I know up at the factory where I work we often need a boy to run errands and carry light packages, when the regular boy is out. It's too far away, or you could come down there and earn a little money."

"Well, with my ten cents and fifteen for cutting the grass, I'll have twenty-five cents," went on Tommy. "That will help buy some wood, and we've got about half a dollar in the treasury," he added, proudly.

"Good luck to you!" cried Mr. Tiptop as his son went up to bed.

Tommy arose early the next morning and had most of the grass cut before it was time to go to school. He finished it at noon, and though he wanted to go and practice baseball playing with the boys on the new diamond they had made, Tommy decided that he would go downtown and see if he could not find a chance to earn money.

"Can I run any errands for you?" he asked in several stores. But though the merchants were kind, and smiled at Tommy, they did not need any help just then.

"I'll try that florist's over there," decided our hero, as he got in front of the flower place. "Maybe he has bouquets to send out somewhere. Then, if I don't get a chance, I'll go back home and try it again to-morrow."

"Any errands to run?" he asked of the proprietor of the flower shop. The man was standing behind the counter, holding a long box in his hand.

"Errands!" he exclaimed. "Do you run errands?"

"I haven't run any yet," answered Tommy, with a smile, "but I'd like to. Can't I carry those flowers for you? I'll be careful, and I'll go as fast as I can."

"Humph!" exclaimed the man. "I do happen to want

this box of roses delivered in a hurry. My young man is away over on the other side of town, and I don't know when he will be back. But I don't know you, and these roses are worth about three dollars. How am I to know that you won't run away with them, instead of delivering them to the right person? A lady wants to wear them to a party to-night. Of course you *look* like a nice, honest boy," went on the man, with a smile, "but I have to be careful. I lost some money once, trusting a boy I didn't know. Who are you and where do you live?"

"I'm Tommy Tiptop," replied our hero, adding his address, "and I——"

"Tommy Tiptop, eh?" exclaimed the man. "Oh, I've heard about you. You're getting up a ball nine, aren't you?"

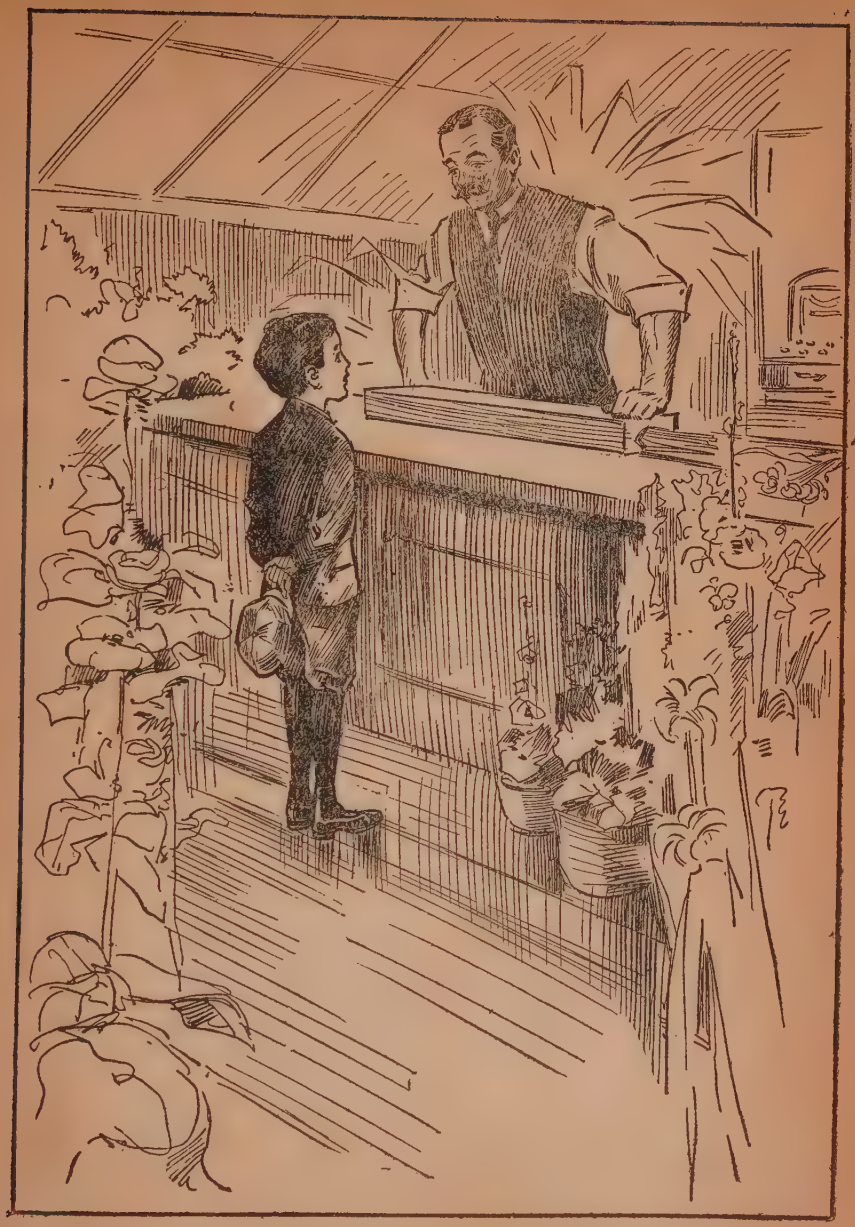
"Yes, sir, and I'm trying to earn money running errands, so we can build a back-stop. But do you play ball?"

"Oh, no, but I've got a nephew who does — Mortimer Manchester. I've heard him speak of you."

"Yes, Mortimer is on my team," spoke Tommy, proudly. "I think I will let him play shortstop, but I'm not quite sure. I'm the captain," he explained.

"Yes, so Mortimer said. He's taken quite a notion to you. Well, I'm his uncle, and I guess we're well enough introduced now. I'm glad you happened to come in, Tommy, and I'm going to let you deliver these roses. I'll give you fifteen cents for taking them to this address. Don't be any longer than you can help, for they should have been delivered some time ago. Here is your money. The roses are paid for, and you needn't come back here. Good luck to you!" and the florist handed Tommy a dime and a five-cent piece.

"Say, I am having luck to-day!" thought the boy as he



"Any Errands to Run," He Asked of the Proprietor of the Flower Shop.

put the box of roses under his arm. "This is thirty cents I've earned. We'll soon have our back-stop built, and then I'm going to see if we can't play some regular teams. Do you know any team of our size?" he asked the florist.

"Humph! Not in town. I once had an errand boy who lived in Freeport; that's the next village, you know. He belonged to a small nine there, I heard him say."

"What was his name?" asked Tommy, eagerly. "I wonder if I couldn't write to him? Maybe his team would play ours."

"It's worth trying," suggested the florist. "His name was Joe Forker, and he was the pitcher, I believe. Just address him at Freeport. Everyone goes to the post-office there for their mail, and he'll be sure to get the letter. It isn't so far but what the team there could come over here to play, or you could go there."

"I'll do it!" decided Tommy, "and I wish, if we do have a game, that you'd come to see it. We can't charge any admission," he added, "as we haven't any fence around the lot. But we are going to take up a collection, and you needn't put anything in the hat when it's passed around," Tommy said, generously.

"Thanks!" exclaimed the florist. "Now, you'd better hurry on with the roses."

As Tommy was going out of the store he looked down in an alleyway and saw a number of packing boxes. At once he had an idea.

"Are those boxes yours?" he asked of Mortimer's uncle.

"Yes, and I don't know what to do with 'em. Guess I'll have to pay a man to clear them out of the way."

"Don't do that!" exclaimed Tommy, quickly. "If you'll let me take 'em, I'll get some of the boys and clear 'em away for nothing, and we'd be glad of the chance."

"You're welcome to them," replied the man, whose name was Mr. Fillmore. "But what are you going to do with them?"

"I think we can use some of 'em to make our back-stop with!" exclaimed Tommy, and he hurried off with a big idea in his mind.

CHAPTER IX

TOMMY'S NINE PLAYS

"SAY, that's a great idea!" exclaimed Joie Grubb.

"I should say it was," added Georgie Pennington.

"Wonder why we didn't think of it ourselves?" asked Teddy Bunker.

"Oh, it takes Tommy Tiptop to do things," declared Sammie Sandlass, ruffling his red hair. "It's a good thing he came to town."

"Oh, well, it just happened to come to me," said Tommy, who blushed a bit at all this praise, though he could not help liking it. It was the day after he had had his idea about building a back-stop from the lumber of the old boxes, and he and his chums were clearing the packing cases out of the cellar of the florist's shop and out of the alleyway.

"Look out for nails in your hands!" warned Mr. Fillmore, as he watched the boys at work. "You can't play ball if you get all scratched up."

"Say, we ought to get a hammer, knock out some of these nails and save 'em," proposed Tommy. "We'll need all the nails we can get to put up the back-stop."

"That's a good idea," declared Joie Grubb. "I'll ask Mr. Fillmore for the hammer."

One was supplied, and many nails were pulled out, being carefully saved to be straightened and used again. Box after box was taken, some large and some small. A

number of the boys had hand wagons, and on these they piled the boxes. It made quite a procession when they were ready to start for the ball field, as there were eight or ten boys and nearly half a dozen carts.

"Say, what's going on?" asked Mr. Wentworth, the hardware merchant, who had a store next to the florist's. "Are those boys going to have an election bonfire?"

"They're going to make a baseball back-stop," explained Mr. Fillmore. "That's a plucky chap at the head of the nine—Tommy Tiptop." And he related how our hero had gone on the errand for him and had had the idea about using the old packing cases.

"Say, .that's the kind of boys I like!" exclaimed the hardware man. "Boys who do things. If they want any nails for their back-stop, just you tell 'em I'll supply all they need for nothing. They've got pluck to start a small nine, and I'd like to see 'em play some time. The big team here is so professional, and they depend so much on the pitcher, that it's no fun watching them play sometimes."

"That's right," agreed Mr. Fillmore. "Some day you and I will go and see these small chaps play an old-fashioned game of ball, without much regard for the rules —the same kind of a game you and I played when we were youngsters."

"Oh, but the game is different now," said the hardware man. "You'll find that these small chaps know almost as much about the rules as their bigger brothers. But that Tommy Tiptop has certainly started things moving around here. I like that kind of a boy."

Spring was turning into summer, and it was fine baseball weather, the boys thought, as they turned into the field which they had made into a fairly good diamond and where they intended to start their back-stop.

They had already played several practice games, and they did very well. Everyone said Tommy made a fine captain.

"How do you make a back-stop?" asked Joie Grubb when the procession, which had been made larger by the addition of a number of admiring smaller lads, reached the diamond. "I never built one before."

"Neither did I," replied Tommy, "but I looked at the one on the big diamond. There are just some posts stuck in the ground, and then boards nailed on them crossways."

"Then we've got to get some posts," said practical Teddy.

"There are a lot of fence rails in that pile," added Billie. "If Mr. Bashford would let us take them they'd do fine!"

"I'll go ask him," volunteered Tommy. "I know him pretty well now. You fellows can be knocking the sides off the boxes, and be careful to save the nails, and don't split the boards."

The boys became busy as their captain ran off to make his request of the farmer. Not only did Mr. Bashford say they could take as many posts as they needed, but he loaned them a post spade with which to dig the holes.

"Whew! It's hard work!" exclaimed Tommy when, after nearly a half hour's work, he had not got a hole deep enough to hold the post firmly. The meadow land was rather heavy to dig.

"Let me try," suggested Sammie Sandlass.

He was struggling with the spade, and Tommy was wondering how long before he could arrange for a regular game, when a strange voice exclaimed:

"You boys don't know how to dig holes. Let me try!"

They turned quickly, and Tommy beheld rather an old

man, clad in ragged garments, who was looking at the lads with a good-natured smile on his face. Tommy had never seen him before, but several of the other lads seemed to know him, for they at once exclaimed:

"Hello, Old Johnny Green! What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just walking around," answered the man. "I saw you boys over here, and I thought maybe you were going to have a campfire and cook something. I was hungry, so I came over. But I see what you're doing. Let me dig the post holes for you."

He took the spade from Sammie's hand, and soon had a hole sufficiently deep to hold a post when the dirt was filled in around it.

"Who is he?" asked Tommy of Teddy in a whisper, as the two lads were knocking more sides off the boxes.

"Johnny Green is his name, and everybody always calls him 'Old,' because there is another Mr. Green, of the same name, in town."

"Is he a tramp?" asked Tommy.

"No, but he never works—that is, to make any money. He's always willing to help everybody else at any work he sees going on, but he won't work for himself—sort of shiftless, my father says."

"How does he live?" asked Tommy.

"Oh, the town helps support him. If he would only work steadily, he could make good money, for he is handy with tools. But he wanders all around. Everybody likes him, for he's kind and gentle. He'll probably be around our ball field all summer, and he'll help us all he can."

"Then we'll treat him right," decided Tommy. "I'm glad he's digging those holes, for we never could do it."

Old Johnny Green proved that he knew how to do

other things besides dig the holes, for he showed the boys the best way in which to nail the boards on the posts.

"You'll need more nails, though," he said when the bottom layer of boards had been put on, and when the back-stop was really beginning to look like something.

"I'll go buy some," volunteered Tommy. "We can take the money out of the treasury later."

But he did not have to spend any of his change for nails, for the hardware man, true to his promise, supplied all that were needed.

"We're getting on fine!" thought Tommy on his way back to the lot.

The back-stop was not finished that night, but Old Johnny Green rather surprised the boys, and other people too, by working on it all the next day, so that it was completed late in the afternoon. Tommy told his mother about the queer character, and she sent him a big basket of victuals, which Old Johnny Green said more than paid him for his work for the boys.

"And now we're ready for games!" exclaimed Tommy, as they looked at the completed back-stop.

"Have you heard from those fellows in Freeport yet?" asked Billie.

"No, but I expect to in a few days," replied the young captain. He got a letter from Joe Forker the next morning. Joe was captain of the Freeport Ramblers now, and he wrote that they would play Tommy's team, which had been named the Riverdale Roarers, on the following Saturday.

"Then we've got to do some hard practice," decided Tommy, as he proudly read to his players the first challenge acceptance they had received.

"We sure will!" exclaimed Teddy.

"Say, we're like a regular nine!" declared Billie in delight.

"If we only had uniforms!" sighed Tommy. That was his one big ambition, and he hoped the Freeport Ramblers would not have suits. But they did, and very trim they looked in them when they reached the grounds on Saturday afternoon.

In the meanwhile Tommy and his chums had been doing some hard practice, and they felt that they could win unless the other team had better players. And when Tommy looked over the visiting nine, he felt a little doubtful of the ability of his own.

"But we'll do our best!" he exclaimed.

A few seats had been put up from wood left over from the back-stop, and on these the players could sit. There were no seats for the audience, and, as a matter of fact, there was not much of a crowd. There were lots of the town boys—the smaller ones—and a few men and youths, who had nothing in particular to do. But Tommy and his friends did not care for the audience so much as they did care to play ball.

Tommy had a talk with Joe Forker, the other captain, and little time was wasted. They picked out an umpire. Tommy, who was to do the pitching, had some "warm-up" practice with Teddy, who would catch, and then, as the visitors had lost the toss, and had to take first inning, Tommy went to the pitching box.

"Make him give you a good ball now!" called Henry Hicks to Will Warnton, who was first up at the bat.

"I'm going to make a home run!" retorted Will, boastingly.

"Play ball!" called the umpire, and Tommy threw what he hoped would be a curve.

Tommy Tiptop's nine was playing its first regular game, and the young captain felt very proud and happy, as he realized that it was due mostly to his own efforts that this had come about.

CHAPTER X

TOMMY GOES FISHING

"THAT'S the way to hit 'em out!"

"Come on now, Will; make a home run!"

"Say, he hit that good and hard!"

These were some of the cries that greeted Will Warnton's first strike at the ball which Tommy had pitched him, and hit it Will did, sending the horsehide away out toward center field.

"Go after it!" shouted Tommy. "Don't let him get to second base!"

Frank Bonder, who was nearest to the ball, ran to get under it. Down it came, right in his fingers.

"He's out!"

"He won't make a run!"

"That's the way to catch 'em!"

It seemed as if every boy on the grounds was yelling at once. No wonder poor Frank got confused and dropped the ball! For that is exactly what he did, letting it slip through his fingers.

There was a groan of despair from Tommy and his chums, for Will was safe on second base.

"Never mind," consoled the young captain of the Riverdale Roarers. "They won't get any more hits, and we'll get him out soon."

"Oh, don't be too sure of that," came from the runner on second, as he danced about, trying to make Herbert

Kress, who was second baseman, get nervous. "I'm going to make the run pretty soon."

"I guess I didn't curve that ball very much," thought Tommy, as he got ready for the next hitter. As soon as he threw the ball, Will, on second base, started for third. At once there was more shouting and confusion, boys jumping up and down and yelling at the top of their voices. It was very clear that the visiting team had had more experience than had Tommy's nine.

Will got to third, but he did not get home right away, as the boy at the bat was put out on a foul, which the catcher grabbed just in time. Then the next lad up hit a ball that went right between the legs of fat Joie Grubb, who was shortstop. When the inning was over the visitors had two runs.

"But we'll win!" declared Tommy to his boys, confidently.

It did not look so at first, for when three innings had been played the score stood four runs to six in favor of the Ramblers.

Then Tommy and his chums braced up, and though they had never before played together in a regular game, though they had no uniforms, and not a very good outfit, they played so well that they tied the score.

"But we've got to *win!*" cried Tommy, as it came time for his boys to go out in the field. "We've got to *win!*"

"I hope we do," said Sammie Sandlass. "But their pitcher throws big curves."

"I've got to have more practice at that," admitted Tommy. "They're a stronger team than we are, but I think we can win."

It came to the ending of the ninth inning. The score had increased until it was now ten runs to eleven in favor

of the Ramblers. It was the turn of the Riverdale Roarers to bat for the last time. If they could get two runs they would win. Could they do it?

"We're just going to!" exclaimed Tommy. "I bat right after you do, Teddy. You try and knock a three-bagger, and I'll try to make a home run, and that will win us the game."

"Of course I'll try," spoke Teddy, "but you know it isn't so easy to make runs as you'd think."

"Of course I know, but do it! Do it!"

"Yes, you're the boy who does things!" laughed Teddy. "Well, here I go," he added, as he walked up to home plate.

"One strike!" shouted the umpire, though Teddy had not moved his bat.

"Say, I didn't strike at that," objected the batter.

"I know you didn't, but you had ought to," replied the umpire. "It was right over the plate."

"Of course it was," declared the rival pitcher. "I can put 'em just where I want to."

"Then put one here!" cried Teddy, holding out his bat about level with his belt, "and I'll knock it over the barn!"

"I'd like to see you do it!" retorted the pitcher.

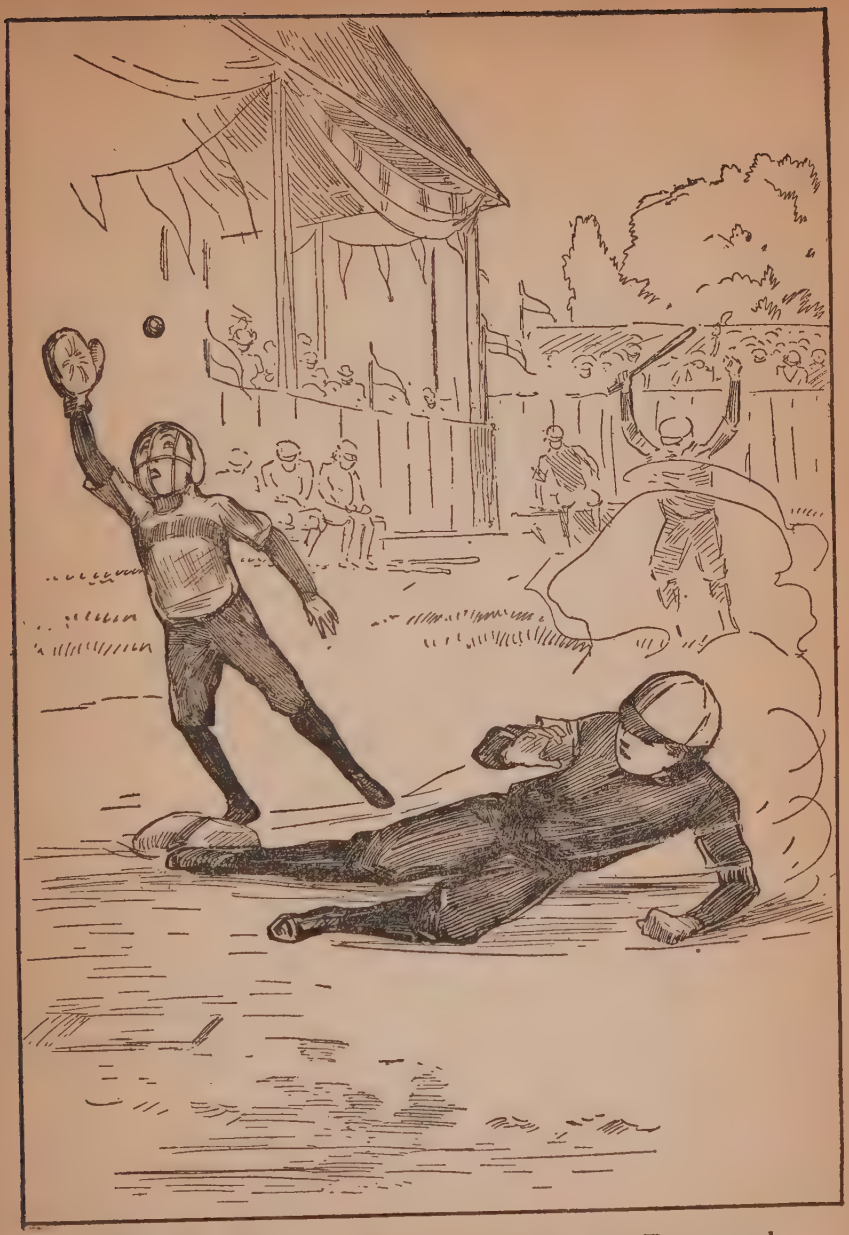
Well, Teddy did not exactly knock the ball over the barn, but he did send it quite a distance, and he managed to get to third base, because the right fielder muffed the ball.

"Now for a home run, and we win the game!" cried Tommy.

"You never can," spoke Joie Grubb, despairingly.

There were two strikes called on Tommy, almost before he knew it, and he shut his teeth firmly together and made up his mind that he would hit the next ball. And he did.

Away it sailed, right over the head of the center fielder,



But He Had to Slide Through the Dust and Grass to Make It.

for Tommy was a sturdy lad, and he put all his strength into that one strike.

"Go on! Go on!"

"A home run!"

"Leg it, Tommy! Leg it!"

"We'll win the game!"

Once again everybody was shouting. Teddy had started from third base toward home. Tommy had rounded first and was going for second as fast as he could.

He got to third as the boy who had raced after the ball threw it in.

"I've got to get there ahead of that ball!" thought our hero.

And he did. But he had to slide through the dust and grass to make it, and he tore a hole in his trousers. But he did not mind that, for he had on an old suit, and he thought the winning of the game would more than make up for the ripped garment.

"We win! We win!" cried the Riverdale Roarers.

"Of course we win!" yelled Teddy. "It takes Tommy Tiptop to do things!"

There was a moment of silence on the part of the visiting nine. It had happened so suddenly that they could not realize it. They had been sure of victory, and at the last moment their rivals had won. They did not understand it.

"That was a great run, Tommy!" exclaimed Billie Ruggler.

"Well, I knew I just *had* to make it!" panted Tommy.

Then the losers cheered the winners and the winners gave a cheer for the losers, and the first real game was over.

"But we'll play you another," said the captain of the visitors. He did not like to lose.

"Of course," agreed Tommy. "Next time we may have suits."

"I'd rather win the game than have uniforms," went on the captain of the losing side. "But next time *we* will win."

Tommy laughed as his chums gathered around him, and then the two teams left the field. As our hero walked out of the lane to the village street he saw his sister. A girl was with her.

"Oh, Tommy, did you win?" asked Nellie.

"Sure we did," he answered. "But it was hard work. I made a home run."

"Oh, that was fine!" exclaimed Nellie's friend, and then, for the first time, Tommy noticed that she was the girl he had saved from the bull.

"Oh, how are you?" he asked. "You're Joie's sister, aren't you? Joie played fine to-day."

"He's very fat to play ball," remarked Sallie. "Mamma says she doesn't see how he does it."

"Oh, he isn't so fat as he was," spoke Tommy. "He got thin helping build the back-stop, I guess."

The back-stop had been a great help to the lads in playing ball, for the catchers were not expert enough to stop all the balls the pitchers delivered, and the structure of posts and boards, which Old Johnny Green had helped build, came in very nicely. It stopped the missed balls from rolling too far away. The old man was on hand to see the game, and he clapped loudly every time Tommy and his friends did well.

Tommy, with his sister and Sallie and some other companions, walked toward home, talking about the great game. Tommy fairly burst into the house, actually falling up the steps in his eagerness, crying out:

"We won, ma! We won! We beat the other team! Now, who says we can't play ball?"

"Indeed, did you win, dear? I'm very glad!" replied his mother, as she stroked his damp hair with her hand. "Oh, but how warm you are, Tommy!"

"Yes, it was hot. But now I've got to write a letter to see about a game for next Saturday."

Tommy could not arrange for a regular contest during the next week, but he managed to have a game between his own team and a scrub one from boys about town, for there was quite a baseball fever in Riverdale since Tommy's nine had won. Every boy who could manage it, had a glove, a ball and a bat, and practiced at odd times in vacant lots or on the new diamond.

Tommy's nine won their second game, but they did not take much credit for that, as the scrub team they played had no regular organization.

"But it is good practice for us," remarked Tommy, and the others agreed with him.

At odd times they worked on the diamond, getting rid of the stones, clearing away the grass from the home plate and along the base lines.

Several of the other boys did odd bits of work about town and earned money so that they were able to buy bag-bases, some new balls and occasionally a new bat. The catcher had a second-hand mask.

But they could not quite manage the uniforms. Some of the boys did coax their parents to buy them ball suits, but the nine, as a whole, did not have them, and there were hardly any two alike. Tommy got one, with the letters "R. R." in red on his shirt, and very proud he was, too. Sometimes, when some boy could not play, he would loan his suit to a friend.

As the days of summer went on, Tommy's nine played many games, losing some and winning more. The fathers, and, in some cases, the mothers of the players, came to see a game occasionally, and Mr. Fillmore, the florist, and his friend, Mr. Wentworth, the hardware man, paid several visits to the new diamond.

It was a warm summer's day, and Tommy, who had been at the head of his class in school for seven times in succession, was, as a reward of merit, allowed to come out at two o'clock on Friday. There were none of his close friends who had the same honor, so Tommy did not have anyone to chum with, and, though he was glad to be out of school, he hardly knew what to do with himself.

"I guess I'll go fishing," he decided, as he hurried toward home.

Up in his room he had a good pole, lines, hooks and all things needful. It was the work of only a few minutes to dig some worms in the garden, catch a grasshopper or two and start for the creek which flowed about half a mile from the house.

"Bring home enough for supper," called his mother after her boy, as Tommy strolled off, with his pole over his shoulder. "Catch some nice big ones, Tommy, but don't fall in!"

"I won't," he promised, and then he hurried on, whistling a merry tune, and wondering whether his nine would win the baseball game that was to be played the following day.

"I wonder if the fellows in Millton have a nine yet," he said to himself. "I must write a card to some of the boys, tell them about our nine, and see if they can play us. I think that would be fun."

CHAPTER XI

TOMMY IS IN DANGER

"OH, THAT'S a dandy!" exclaimed Tommy. "A regular dandy! A few more like that, and I'll have enough for supper!"

He had pulled up his line, after having fished for about an hour, and, dangling from the hook, was a fine, fat chub, a very delicious white fish.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the lad as the fish dropped off the hook to the grass and tried to flop toward the water. "I can't lose you that way!" And he made a grab for his prize. "You're the biggest one yet. Wait a minute and I'll have you in the water again, but you can't swim away. Sorry, but it's got to be," and he passed a string through the gills of the fish, and then, fastening one end of the cord to a stone, Tommy let the big fish and a few other smaller ones he had previously caught swim about in a little pool.

Tommy once more baited his hook and tossed it into the water. But the catching of the big chub must have frightened the others, for there were no more bites for some time.

"Guess this hole is fished out," remarked Tommy. "I'm going to try the lower one. If I get one more big fellow, I'll quit."

Winding up his line, he took his string of fish and tramped along the edge of the creek to another fishing hole. There, after putting his fish in the water to keep them alive

and fresh, he sat down on the bank, baited the hook with a green grasshopper instead of a worm and awaited results.

They were not long in coming, for in less than two minutes he had caught a perch about as large as his big chub. And then, instead of doing as he had said he would, go home, after another fair catch, he threw in his line again.

"Fishing is good here. I might as well stay a little longer," he said. "If I get two more fat ones——"

He stopped suddenly, for he felt a tug on his line, and he pulled in sharply. To his surprise, a black, heavy body, with short, wriggling legs, arose from the water.

"Oh, I don't want you!" exclaimed the lad as he saw that he had caught a mud turtle. "Now I'll have a hard time getting my hook out!"

And indeed he did have, for the turtle had all but swallowed the barb. But finally Tommy managed to cut it out, without hurting the turtle much. Then he tossed the turtle back into the stream, baited up afresh and waited patiently for another bite.

It came with a rush about ten minutes later, and proved to be one of the biggest perches Tommy had ever caught.

"That's a dandy!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad I came here. I guess I won't fish for any more. I've got enough. Oh, no, I'll try for one more, and if I don't get it by the time the sun is even with the top of the oak tree, I'll go home. I wish some of the fellows would come along. It's getting lonesome. They must be out of school by this time."

As Tommy went to put his latest catch on the string that held his other fish, he saw a splashing in a pool of water not far away. The sun shone on the silver sides of a big fish, as with its tail it slapped the water.

"That's queer, a big fish so near shore!" said Tommy to himself, and, after he had made his own prizes secure, he walked over to see what had caused the commotion.

"Why, somebody else has been fishing here!" he exclaimed as he saw two or three fish in a little pool of water. They were strung on a string, as were his own. "They've been fishing and they've forgotten to take 'em away," he went on. "Nice big ones, too," he said. "I wonder whose they are?"

He stooped over to examine the fish, lifting them from the water by the string. As he did so the cord suddenly broke, and, like flashes of silver, the beauties dropped into the water and swam away.

"Well, now I *have* done it!" exclaimed Tommy. "If the fellow who owns these fish comes along, I'm in——"

"Here! What are you doing there?" suddenly asked a rough voice, and, looking behind him, Tommy saw Jakie Norton, standing and looking at him with anger in his eyes.

"What are you doing here?" repeated Jakie.

"Fishing, of course," answered Tommy, shortly, for he did not like the way in which the bully talked to him.

"Fishing, eh? And in my place, too. Now you get out of here!"

"I didn't know this was your special place," replied Tommy, sturdily, "and I don't think you've got any more rights here than I have. Anyhow, I'm done fishing, so I'm going."

"What have you got there?" suddenly asked Jakie, catching sight of the string in Tommy's hand — the string that was now empty of fish. "What are you doing with my string?" demanded the bully.

"Is—is this your string?" asked Tommy, and he did not

know what to say next. "I—I found it here," he went on slowly, "and I—er——"

"Where are the fish that were on it?" demanded Jakie, angrily.

"They—well, I guess you didn't have 'em fastened good!" replied our hero. "Anyhow, when I lifted 'em up they slipped off, and—well, they got away."

"But what right did you have to lift 'em up?" screamed Jakie.

"I wanted to see whose they were."

"They were mine, that's whose they were, and I believe you let them go on purpose!" exclaimed the bully.

"No, I didn't; honestly," replied Tommy. "I just lifted 'em up, and they slipped off the string. It broke, and the end came untied."

"Oh, it did, eh? Well, maybe that's so, and maybe it isn't. Anyhow, I'm going to take your fish to make things even, and we'll see how you'll like that!" And before Tommy could stop him, Jakie had scrambled down to the edge of the creek, and had grabbed up Tommy's string of fish from the pool between the rocks.

"Huh! You've got some good-sized ones," Jakie said, half admiringly. "'Most as good as mine were. Well, I'll take 'em home. They'll come in handy for supper."

"They're bigger than the fish you had!" cried Tommy, "and there's more of 'em. You only had about three. Maybe it was my fault that your fish got away, but it was an accident. I'll give you three of mine to make up for it, but don't you dare take my whole string!"

"Ha! Don't you say 'dare' to me!" commanded Jakie. "I'll do as I please. Get out of my way!" he exclaimed, roughly, as he shoved Tommy to one side, and hurried up the bank, taking our hero's string of fish with him.

"Give me back those fish!" cried Tommy.

"Not to-day," sneered the bully, and, as Tommy made a grab for them, Jakie hit him on the chest.

Poor Tommy staggered back. He was not a boy in the habit of fighting, for his parents, he knew, did not like him to use his fists. Yet he did not want to be imposed upon. He felt that Jakie could get the best of him in a fight; still, somehow, Tommy was not afraid.

"Are you going to take my fish?" Tommy asked, quietly, for he thought Jakie might, after all, be only playing a joke.

"Of course I am," answered the older boy, sneeringly.

"Then I'm going to take them away from you," retorted Tommy. "Look out!"

He was about to make a spring for his antagonist, when he heard someone approaching through the bushes. Both boys half turned their heads to see who it was. It might be a friend of either of them.

Jakie was on the alert to run away, for he realized that if one of Tommy's friends came along the two boys would more than be a match for him.

And then the figure that was coming through the bushes came into view. At the sight of another lad, who quickly advanced, Jakie called out:

"Hello, Sam! Glad you came. This lad here let my string of fish go, and when I want to take his string, he says I can't."

"It was an accident!" explained Tommy, who had heard about the other boy—a crony of Jakie's, and as cruel and mean as the bully himself. "It was an accident," insisted Tommy. "I was only looking at his fish, but I'm willing to give him as many back as he had."

"Oh, take 'em all, Jakie," advised Sam Belton, the new-

comer, with a short laugh. "He doesn't need fish. We'll divide 'em between us, Jakie."

"No, you won't!" cried Tommy, driven to anger, and he made a move toward the two boys.

"Say, I believe he wants to fight us!" exclaimed Sam. "Come on, Jakie, and we'll throw him in the brook. It'll do him good."

Tommy paused. He could swim fairly well, but he knew it would be hard work with his clothes on. Besides, he did not want to get wet, as his suit was a good one, and the creek was deep at that point.

"That's right, we'll duck him!" agreed Jakie. "I owe him something for being so fresh about that bat."

"It was my bat!" cried Tommy, "and those are my fish, and——"

He was going to add something about his shoes being hidden at the swimming hole, but thought better of it.

"Grab him, and toss him in!" suddenly called Sam, and he and his crony made a move for Tommy at the same time.

Now, Tommy was not a coward, but, he hastily reflected, he would be no match for two big boys. It was hardly worth while to be tossed in the creek for the sake of a few fish, and, even if they did throw him in, he would not get the fish after all. Besides, there was the danger of drowning.

"I guess I'll have to run for it, though I hate to," decided Tommy.

Now, I hope none of my readers will think less of him for running away. There are times when it is better to run than to fight, especially if you are certain why you run. Tommy did not mind a few hard knocks, and he might even have tackled Jakie or Sam alone. But the two together were too much for him, and then, too, he did not want to make

his mother worry by coming home wet. So he decided to run, though it might look cowardly.

Holding his fishing pole firmly, he made a dash for an open place in the bushes. His two enemies saw his plan at once, and made leaps toward him.

"He's trying to skip!" cried Sam.

"Yes, grab him!" added Jakie.

But Tommy's baseball training served him in good stead, and he was soon ahead of his pursuers, who came on crashing through the bushes after him.

"Coward! Coward!" they yelled, tauntingly, but Tommy was no coward, and they knew it.

"We'll catch you, and when we do we'll duck you twice for running!" yelled Sam.

"You haven't caught me yet," reflected Tommy, with a laugh. Somehow, he did not mind the loss of his fish very much, for Jakie still had his string of prizes.

Tommy was now running along the bank of the creek, through a grassy meadow. He could not see his pursuers behind him, but he could hear them, for he had taken a short cut through the bushes which Joie Grubb had shown him one day, and this gave him a good start.

Yet he realized that if he did not soon get away the two big boys would catch him, for they had longer legs than he had, and were much stronger.

"But if I can get far enough away from the creek they can't throw me in unless they carry me back," reasoned Tommy, "and if they do carry me, and the fish, they're going to have their own troubles."

So on he raced, and he was just thinking that he was well ahead of the two bullies, when he heard their voices close behind him, though still he could not see them.

"We'll have him in another minute!" exclaimed Sam.

"Yes. I'd like to teach him a lesson. The idea of a new boy like him coming to town and starting a ball team. He's got too much nerve!" said Jakie. "Can you see him?"

"No," answered Sam.

Neither could our hero get a glimpse of the boys who were after him. He knew that a screen of bushes hid them from him. Somehow or other, they had gotten ahead of him, and had missed him.

"Oh, if I could only give them the slip!" he exclaimed.

He looked about for a hiding place, and, just ahead of him, he saw an old grist mill, that had not been used in several years. The boys often played in it, and it had many "bunks," or secret hiding places.

"There's where I'll go!" exclaimed Tommy to himself. "They'll never get me there, and I can get in before they find out that they're ahead of me, instead of behind me."

It only took a few seconds to work his way through the bushes until he stood within the dim old mill. He could hear the water from the race splashing down, but the big wheel, which he could see through a break in the wall, was still. It was an old-fashioned under-shot wheel, covered with green moss, and Tommy, who always liked machinery, went closer to look at it.

As he stood near it, wondering how fast it moved when in working order, he heard voices in the old mill.

"I shouldn't wonder but what he slipped in here!" he heard Sam say. The bullies had come back.

"Yes, just as likely as not," said Jakie. "Well, there is a good place to duck him here—right in the mill pond."

"They found out that I'd given them the slip!" thought Tommy, quickly, "and they're back after me. Where can I hide?"

He looked about, half in fun at the idea of giving his

enemies the slip, and half in fear lest they catch him and duck him. There seemed to be no place where he would be safe from their eyes. He looked about in vain, and was about to run up a pair of rickety stairs, though he was sure the boys would hear him. He could catch their footsteps coming nearer and nearer.

"The big mill wheel!" suddenly exclaimed Tommy. "If I could climb up on that I'd be out of sight. And it ought to be as easy as going up stairs."

In fact, the wheel, with its big wooden pockets, or buckets, was not a hard place up which to scramble, as it was low down.

In another moment Tommy had made a spring for it, and soon he reached the top.

He was not a moment too soon, either, for just as he crouched down on the upper rim of the wheel he heard the voices more plainly, and he realized that his pursuers had entered the main room of the mill, from which he had just made his escape.

"He isn't here," he heard Sam say.

"No. I guess he got away after all. Say, let's stay here and have some fun. Did you 'ever make the mill wheel go around?"

"No; how do you do it?" asked Sam.

"Why, you just raise the wooden gate over by the mill race. That lets the water from the pond come down the channel, and the wheel turns over. It's sport. I did it one day, and the wheel went around in great shape. Let's do it."

"All right," agreed Sam. "What are you going to do with your fish?"

"I'll lay 'em down. It's kind of hard to raise the gate,

and let the water in. It'll take two of us, I guess, for it's rusty. But it's fun."

Tommy, lying there on the big water wheel, heard, and, for the moment, a cold chill went over him. They were going to set in motion the very wheel on which he was hiding! He would be carried over with it—down into the whirling, green water, and he might be drowned, or crushed. He wanted to cry out, to tell them he was there—to ask them not to turn on the water—but he could not seem to speak.

He could hear them go laughing from the main room of the mill, laughing between themselves at the fun they were going to have. They had forgotten about Tommy now.

"I must get down! I must get away!" thought the young baseball captain.

For a moment it seemed as if he could not move, and then, as he thought of what might happen, he gave a spring, and tried to slide down over the outer edge of the wheel to the mill floor.

To his surprise and terror, he could move only a few inches. One of his feet had caught in a corner of one of the buckets, and he was held fast there.

"I'm caught! caught!" gasped Tommy.

Vainly he struggled to free himself. Then, from somewhere in another part of the mill, he heard the splashing of water, and it seemed to him that the wheel on which he was held fast was slowly moving.

"Oh, what shall I do?" gasped poor Tommy. "How can I get out of this?"

Louder splashed the water, and the big wheel moved more quickly now, while Tommy could hear the laughter of the two boys, as they opened the water gate wider and wider.

CHAPTER XII.

TOMMY SAVES HIS ENEMY

TOMMY TIPTOP was thinking quickly. He was a plucky lad, and he did not give up hope in the face of danger. But he could not seem to help himself.

Again and again he tried to loosen his foot from where it was caught in a crack in the wheel, but he could not get free. He knew what would happen soon. The water, which came into a sort of long, wooden box, from the mill pond, ran underneath the big wheel, and, by striking on the wooden buckets or pockets, turned the wheel over, and had thus, in the times when the mill was running, moved the grindstones.

"I'll be carried over until I get on the bottom," thought Tommy, "and then I'll be drowned, or crushed."

He was not mistaken. The wheel was moving slowly, and he realized that only a part of the force of water was, as yet, striking the buckets. As the boys opened the gate wider, more water would come in the long, narrow box, and the wheel would turn over faster.

"If I could only untie my shoe, and slip my foot out!" thought Tommy. He had once read of a boy who got his foot caught in a switch on a railroad track. The lad pulled and tugged, but his foot was held fast, and a train was approaching at great speed.

Suddenly that boy had unlaced his shoe, pulled out his foot, and saved himself. Tommy made up his mind to try

the same trick. He leaned forward to get at the laces, but he found that he could not reach them in the position in which he was held.

"That won't do," he decided. He could still hear Sam and Jakie at the water gate. They seemed to be having some trouble raising it.

And then another thought came to our hero. He must shout for help. Why had he not thought of that before? The two boys who had raced after him, though mean bullies, would not want him to be seriously hurt. They had only meant to have fun with him in their rough, cruel way, and they had no idea that he was fast on the mill wheel.

"I'll call to them!" decided Tommy, and, somehow, though it was to save his life, he almost disliked to do it. But there was no help for it. The wheel was moving faster now.

"Help! Help!" sung out Tommy. "I'm on the mill wheel! Caught fast! Turn off the water! Help! Help!"

He waited a moment, hoping for an answer.

None came. He could still hear the splashing of the water and the laughter and shouts of the two boys in a distant part of the mill.

"They can't hear me!" thought Tommy. This idea caused him to make harder efforts than before to loosen his foot, but he could not. Then he called again.

"Help! Help! I'm on the mill wheel!"

There was a sudden rush of water, so loud that it almost smothered Tommy's cries in his own ears, and he knew that he could scarcely be heard ten feet away. At the same time the wheel gave a sudden lurch and swung far over. Tommy could see down below him a dark tunnel, filled with foaming, rushing water.

"Help! Help!" he cried, desperately.

"Did You—Did You Save Me?" Asked Tommy.

Then he saw something else. It was a man—a man in rather ragged clothes, who sprang into the mill through one of the broken windows. The man made a rush for the wheel. Tommy closed his eyes, wishing it was all a dream, and that he would awaken safe in bed.

He heard the rushing of waters louder now, and above them a man's voice seemed to shout:

"Why, it's Tommy Tiptop! Who started that wheel? I've got to stop it!"

Something hit Tommy on the head, and everything got black around him. There was a roaring in his ears, and when he opened his eyes he found himself staring up toward the dusty beams of the ceiling of the old mill. He knew that he was being held in the arms of someone, and, when he turned his head, he saw the kindly face of Old Johnny Green bending over him.

"Did you—did you save me?" asked Tommy.

"I did, and just in time," answered the old man. "What did you want to get up there for, and who started the wheel?"

Tommy told everything that had happened, from the time he went fishing until Sam and Jakie had chased him, and he had taken to the wheel for refuge, being caught there.

"But how did you shut off the water in time?" asked Tommy.

"By pulling on that handle there," replied Johnny Green, pointing to one near the wheel. "That's what it's there for, to stop the wheel suddenly in case of danger, when you haven't time to run and close down the water gate. And I didn't have time.

"I was passing the mill, when I heard the water coming down the flume. I knew some one must have turned it on,

so I came in to see about it. I like to come to the old mill. I used to work here when I was a young man.

"Well, I saw you on the wheel, and I got in front of you on the big platform. As you turned around you sort of fell over toward me, and I grabbed you, but your head hit on a stick of wood. Then I pulled you toward me. I guess I must have yanked your foot out of the hole where it was caught. Then I carried you over here. You had fainted, so I got some water to put on your face, and I shut off the wheel."

"I'm ever so much obliged to you," said Tommy, and, somehow, it did not seem very much to say to the man who had saved his life. "Where are Sam and Jakie?" he asked.

"Don't know," answered Johnny Green. "They run away, I guess, after they started the wheel. Just like boys, though I don't suppose they really thought they had put you in danger. That's just like boys, too. Are you all right, Tommy?"

"I guess so. My head aches."

"That's where you were hit. But come on, I'll take you home. Next time don't get on the mill wheel."

Tommy promised that he would not. He was quite shaky, and besides the pain in his head, his ankle hurt where it had been caught in a hole in the wheel.

"I wonder if I'll be able to play ball to-morrow?" he asked of Old Johnny Green, as they walked along.

"Play ball! Well, I declare! You boys beat all! Here you've been close to being badly hurt, to say the least, and the first thing you think of is baseball."

"But I'm the captain of the team," explained Tommy. "I have to be there. I wonder if I can run on this ankle," and he was about to try a little sprint, when the old man caught him by the arm.

"None of that, Tommy!" he exclaimed. "If you are going to play ball you don't want to strain your ankle until you have to. Just take it easy—go home and rest."

"Will you come home with me?" asked Tommy, "and —and tell my mother how it happened—how you saved me?"

"Well, yes, if you want me to," agreed Johnny Green, slowly, "though I'm not much on calling to folks' houses. My clothes don't look very good," he added.

"My mother doesn't care for clothes," declared Tommy.

You may well imagine there was some excitement in the Tiptop household when Tommy's story was told. And you may also well imagine that Old Johnny Green was thanked over and over again, for the part he had played.

When Sam and Jakie learned how narrowly Tommy had escaped, they were very much frightened, and their fathers came over to tell Mr. Tiptop that they had punished their sons, though the boys had said that they did not know Tommy was on the wheel when they started it, and this was true.

Mr. Tiptop was rather stern about the matter, and told how Jakie had often done mean things, and Mr. Norton promised to see if he could not make his boy behave himself in the future.

Though a bit stiff, Tommy was able to play ball the next day, and his nine won from another composed of lads about their own age, from a nearby town.

"Oh, we've got a fine team!" cried Tommy. But, alas! the very next week they met defeat, and at the hands of a team younger than themselves.

Tommy was much downcast and nothing his chums could say made him feel better.

"We've got to practice more!" he declared, and from

then on, nearly every afternoon when school was out, the lads met on the lot, and had practice at batting and catching, sometimes playing a scrub game.

In the meanwhile, neither Sam nor Jakie bothered Tommy any more, though, occasionally, Jakie made sneering remarks.

Tommy spent all his spare time at baseball, and his mother said he even talked it in his sleep. But he was very enthusiastic about it, and so was every member of his team.

Only about half the nine had uniforms, and Tommy's dearest wish was to get them all fitted out. But some of the boys were too poor to afford the suits.

"I wonder how we could make a little extra cash?" asked Herbert Kress.

"Why not give a show?" suggested Georgie Pennington.

"What kind?" asked Tommy.

"Oh, a minstrel show, or an Indian one. We fellows could do the acting. We could have it in my barn, I guess, and charge a nickel admission, and ten cents for reserve seats. I was in a show with some other fellows once, and we made five dollars."

"Say, it would be great if we could do that!" exclaimed Tommy. "We could get the rest of the suits then."

It was a few days after this, and Tommy was thinking hard on the subject of giving a show, when his mother asked him to take a message for her, late one afternoon, to a lady who lived a short distance out of town, on a country road. It was something about a meeting of a new society of women, which Mrs. Tiptop had joined.

Tommy completed his errand, and he was trudging along toward home, munching a piece of cake the lady had

given him, when, from behind him, he heard a shout of terror.

Looking back, he saw a horse running along the road, dragging something after him in the dust. And it was from this something that the shouts were coming.

Tommy felt his heart beating fast. He recognized the voice as that of his enemy, Jakie Norton, who was in great danger.

"Oh, I've got to save him!" gasped our hero.

The horse was coming on rapidly, swaying the unfortunate lad from side to side in the dust. Tommy did not know much about stopping runaway horses, and he was too small to reach up and try to grasp the bridle, even if he had dared do such a thing. But he remembered once he had seen a man stand in front of a runaway team, and, by holding out his arms, turn them aside into a light wooden fence, where they came to a halt.

"I'm going to try that way!" exclaimed Tommy to himself. He stood in the middle of the road. The horse was near to him now, but the boy it was dragging no longer shouted.

"Whoa! Whoa there!" yelled Tommy, waving his arms up and down.

The horse snorted in terror, and then suddenly swerved to one side, almost running into the fence. He came to a halt and then Tommy acted quickly.

In a flash he had his pocket knife out, with the big blade newly sharpened, and, while the horse stood close to the fence, trembling in fright, the small lad slipped around and cut the lines loose from the foot of Jakie, around which they were caught. And it was done not a moment too soon, for, an instant later, the horse started off again.

CHAPTER XIII

TOMMY GIVES A SHOW

"ARE you much hurt, Jakie? How did it happen? Is your head cut?"

Tommy asked these questions of the lad, who lay so still and quiet on the grass at the side of the roadway. He tried to lift Jakie's head, but it fell back, very limp at the neck.

"I—I guess he's badly hurt," murmured Tommy, and then he heard someone running toward him. It was a man, from a nearby farmhouse.

"Say, you did the right thing!" the man exclaimed. "I saw you turn that horse. Who is he?" and he pointed to Jakie.

Tommy told the name, also giving his own.

At that moment Jakie opened his eyes. Then he caught sight of Tommy.

"Did—did you stop that horse?" he asked, slowly.

Tommy nodded. Somehow, he was more glad at having done Jakie a good turn than he would have been had he taken revenge on him for some of the mean things the bully had done to him.

"Indeed, he did stop it!" exclaimed the farmer. "It was as plucky a thing as I ever saw. Then, before the animal had a chance to drag you along farther, he cut the lines. It was done good and proper, and you can thank your lucky stars that you aren't hurt any worse than you are."

"I want to thank him," said Jakie, suddenly holding out his hand to Tommy. "Say," he went on, awkwardly, "will you—I mean I'm sorry for what I did to you—I didn't mean——"

"Do you think you can go home?" asked Tommy, of the lad who had been his enemy.

"If you can't I'll hitch up and drive you in," promised the farmer.

"Oh, I'm all right," insisted Jakie. "Just a little dizzy. I can walk."

"I'll go with you," volunteered Tommy.

For a while, as they walked along, there was an awkward silence between the boys. They did not know what to say to each other. Jakie wanted to tell Tommy how he regretted being so mean, and Tommy did not want to make his new friend feel badly by letting him do it.

"Do you think you can manage to walk home?" asked Tommy, at length, to start some talk.

"Oh, yes. Say, how is your ball nine coming on?"

"Pretty good. We play every Saturday, and sometimes in the middle of the week. Have you seen our diamond?"

"Yes, and it's pretty good for kids—I mean for boys like you to fix up," and Jakie corrected himself quickly. "It's a good back-stop you have."

"Yes, Old Johnny Green helped us make it."

"Humph! He's the man who saved you from the water wheel. Say, I'm real sorry about that. Sam and I never dreamed you were on it, and——"

"Oh, I know," interrupted Tommy, quickly. "Don't worry about that. I—can't we—that is, can't we be friends?" he asked. "I—er—that is——"

"Say, will you?" asked Jakie, eagerly. "I would like to be friends with you. It was all my fault, and——"

"It was partly mine, too," went on Tommy. "I—I guess I shouldn't have got so mad that time you took my bat."

"Honestly, that was only a joke," explained Jakie. "I saw you were a new boy in town, and I wanted to have some fun with you."

"Then it's all right," answered the young captain. "Come to our games sometimes," he invited. "Of course, we're not very good players, but we have lots of fun."

"Sure I'll come. Say, you've got quite a nine, I think. Have all the lads got uniforms?"

"No, and I wish they did have. We have some challenges from a lot of uniformed teams, and our boys don't look good next to the fellows with suits on. But we haven't the money yet, and some of the lads can't raise the cash themselves. We're going to have a show soon, and try to make some money."

"Are you? Say, that's a good way."

The boys walked on in silence for some little distance farther, and though Jakie was very lame and stiff, and had a number of bruises, his heavy clothing, and the fact that the road was covered with a layer of soft dust, had saved him from a serious injury.

"I'm going to stop at Mr. Armstrong's on my way home," he said, after a while, "and ask if the horse got back all right. He might think it was my fault."

The horse was back in his stable when Tommy and Jakie reached the Armstrong farmhouse, and Mr. Armstrong, very much worried by the return of the steed alone, and by the cut ends of the line, was about to start off in search of Jakie.

As Tommy and his new friend were proceeding on to-

ward their homes, the larger lad turned suddenly to his companion, and asked:

"Say, wouldn't you fellows like to take my moving-picture magic lantern for your show?"

"Say! I just guess we would!" cried Tommy, in delight. "But it's a big machine, isn't it? It might get damaged."

"I'll take a chance," replied Jakie, good-naturedly. "I'll run it for you myself, if you'll let me. I'd like to do you some favor for what you did for me to-day."

"Thanks," answered Tommy. "It would be fine if you'd run the lantern. I've been wondering if we could get up anything good enough to charge ten cents admission for, and the lantern will be just the thing."

"I've got some good funny views," went on Jakie.

"Then come over to my house to-night," invited Tommy, "and we'll talk about it. Some of the other boys are going to be there."

And from then on, for a week or more, the activities of Tommy were equally divided between baseball and the coming show. In fact, he gave more time to the show, which seemed as if it was going to be a good one—that is, if enough of the boys were left to make up an audience.

Finally, the afternoon of the performance came. It was on a Saturday, when there was no ball game, and the show was to be given again in the evening.

I haven't the space to tell you all about it, but I will say that it was a great success. Tommy, as a clown, created much laughter, and when the boys did a scene from a dentist's office, behind a sheet, with a light so arranged as to make shadow pictures, the audience laughed again and again.

The moving-picture machine, operated by Jakie, more

than came up to expectations, for some really good views were shown. The performance came to a close by a grand finale in which "the full strength of the company" was used, to quote from the pencil-printed handbills.

The show was given again at night, when a larger crowd came, including a number of men and women, who had been teased into it by their boys and girls, who had been to the afternoon performance.

"Well, how did we make out?" asked Teddy of Tommy that night, when the last act had been given.

"Pretty well, I guess," answered the young captain, as he counted over the money. "Here's a nickel with a hole in!" he exclaimed. "I wonder who passed that on us?"

"Oh, never mind," said Teddy. "We can get four cents for it almost anywhere. How much did we make?"

"Five dollars and fourteen cents," announced Tommy, after adding up some figures on a piece of paper. "It would have been five-fifteen only for that plugged nickel."

"Then we can all have uniforms!" exclaimed Frank Bonder, who was one of the lads who could not afford a suit. He had worked hard for the show, however, and had sold seventy-five cents' worth of tickets.

"Sure we'll have the uniforms," decided Tommy. "It was great, and that moving-picture machine was best of all. We're much obliged to you, Jakie."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm going to get some new views, and I'll help you out next time you have a show."

"That's fine!" exclaimed the lads in a chorus, and Jakie felt his heart warmly glowing. It was nice, he thought, to have so many new friends.

CHAPTER XIV

TOMMY MEETS OLD FRIENDS

"HERE'S a letter for you, Tommy!" said his mother one Saturday morning, when the postman had stopped on his usual round.

"For me?" exclaimed her son. "Is it from Freeport?"

"No, it's from where we used to live. Why, were you expecting a letter from Freeport?"

"Yes, we challenged the Ramblers from there to another game, and they haven't answered it. But I wonder who is writing to me from Millton?"

"It looks like some boy," replied Mrs. Tiptop, as she handed the letter to Tommy.

It did not take him long to read it, and then he cried out:

"Say, momsey, this is great news! It's a challenge from the Millton Junior Athletes! They've got a ball nine, and they want to play my team. Oh, say, this will be fun!"

"I didn't know there was a nine in Millton—that is, a small team," said Mrs. Tiptop. "There wasn't one when you were there."

"I tried to start one," spoke Tommy, "but we moved away too soon. But Dan Danforth, George Squire, Patsie Cook, Billy Newhouse, Pete Johnson and some of the others have a regular nine now. And they have uniforms, Dan writes me. He wants to come here for a game. Oh, I'm glad our team all have suits now! I must write to Dan and tell him to come on, and we'll beat his nine."

The Riverdale Roarers lost their game of ball that day. Some of them said afterward that the umpire was unfair to them, and others admitted that the Hightstown boys were the better players. Tommy was inclined to believe the last.

"We've got to play better than this two weeks from Saturday," he said after the lost game.

"Why?" asked Teddy.

"Because a team of fellows from Millton, where I used to live, is coming here. I've just *got* to beat 'em!"

"We'll help you!" exclaimed Billie, eagerly. "But who do we play this Saturday week?"

"The Ramblers from Freeport. They have a new pitcher, too, and he can curve like anything, I hear."

"Then we'll have to do more practicing," declared Sammie Sandlass. Nearly everyone else thought the same thing, and, beginning with the following Monday afternoon, some hard scrub games took place on the field diamond.

The boys who had, up to this time, no uniforms, were provided with suits for the Rambler game, and though they did not all match, having been bought at different times in different places, still they made the team look very shipshape.

The "R. R." device in red, worked on the shirts of all the suits, showed up bravely in the sun, as the lads trotted out to do a little practicing before the game.

"Now, boys, go in and win!" begged Tommy.

"Sure we will!" they cried in a chorus.

Whether it was the new uniforms, or because the Ramblers made up their minds not to be beaten a second time, was not made plain, but certainly Tommy's team met with another defeat, though not by a very large score.

"I declare, it's too bad!" exclaimed Georgie Pennington,

who had muffed a ball and been responsible for letting the winning run come in. "I don't see how it happened."

"Oh, we're all right!" exclaimed Teddy. "We'll whitewash the Millton Juniors."

The day of the great game came. At least Tommy always called it the "great" game. It was beautiful weather, just right for baseball, and the diamond had been put in extra good shape.

"When are your old friends coming, Tommy?" asked his mother, as tired from practice, but happy and confident, her son came home to dinner.

"About one o'clock, on the trolley. I'm going to meet them."

Several of his team accompanied the young captain to the point where the challenging members would leave the trolley. It was a sort of welcoming committee.

"Guess this must be their car," spoke Tommy, after several electric vehicles had gone past without bringing the nine. "Yes, there they are!" he added as he caught sight of the heads of several lads thrust from the open windows.

"There he is!"

"Nice uniforms they got!"

"We're a bigger team than they are."

"Hello, Tommy Tiptop! How are you?"

"Glad to see you!"

These were only a few of the many expressions that were yelled forth as the car came to a stop. The next minute Tommy was in the midst of his former boy friends of Millton, laughing, talking and shaking hands with them.

CHAPTER XV

TOMMY TASTES VICTORY

"PLAY ball!" called the umpire, a tall lad, a bit older than any of the players. Tommy and Dan Danforth, the rival captains, had decided that an older lad's decisions would stand better than those given by a small youth. "Play ball!"

"Now, Tommy, show 'em how you strike 'em out!" called Sammie Sandlass.

"Yes, nothing less than a whitewash!" added Teddy Bunker. It was all in good-natured fun, and no one minded it.

"We'll get all the runs we need this inning, and then we can take it easy the rest of the game," predicted Captain Dan.

"Yes, we'll see what kind of a wooden arm Tommy has," put in George Squire.

"Come on! Play ball! Play ball!" advised the umpire.

Tommy sent in as swift a ball as he could, and he was quite delighted when Pete Johnson, the first one of the Juniors at bat, missed it.

"I guess I can curve, after all, eh?" asked the pitcher.

"That was an accident. I'll hit the next one," declared Pete, and he did, getting to first base. Patsie Cook made a foul and got out, and Billy Newhouse ran for first, only to be put out there, as he had not hit the ball far enough. But Dan Danforth brought in Pete from third base, with

Tommy and His Mates Disagreed With the Decision of the Umpire.

the first run of the game, and the Roarers felt a little downcast at the start their rivals made. However, that was all the visitors scored in their half of the first inning.

"Now to see what we can do!" exclaimed Tommy, and to his delight his side got two runs. Then there was a discussion about a boy being put out at home. Tommy and his mates disagreed with the decision of the umpire.

"Say, if you don't give in, I'll quit!" declared the boy who was calling strikes and balls.

"Oh, well, we'll give it, but he wasn't out!" insisted Tommy.

"Oh, we'll snow you under!" declared Dan, with a laugh.

From then on the home team played very poor ball, until in the eighth inning the score was ten to six in favor of the visitors, when Tommy's nine came in for their half of that inning.

"Four to tie and five to win!" cried Tommy.

"We never can do it!" declared Teddy, sorrowfully.

"Yes, we can—we've just *got* to!" exclaimed the young captain.

It looked, too, as if they might, for they got three runs without a player being out.

"Oh, we're going through without any trouble!" exulted Tommy. And then his lads got tired and could not hit well, while the other boys did some pretty fielding work.

"We must get that one run!" cried Tommy, but it was not to be, and when the ninth inning opened the score was ten runs to nine in favor of the visitors.

"And here is where we go out!" declared Dan, as his first player stepped to the stone that marked home plate.

"I've just got to pitch for all I'm worth!" thought Tommy, desperately. And he did. Somehow he managed to strike out the two first boys in quick succession. Then

the next one hit what was the best ball of that day. He got to third base on it, and if he had been a little quicker he would have gone home.

"Play for the batter," advised Teddy, who was catching, and Tommy nodded his head, to show that he understood. If they could get the batter out, the run would not come in, and the Roarers would still have a chance to win, as they had the last chance at bat.

"Three balls!" called the umpire, after there had been two strikes named.

"If the next one is a ball, he'll take his base," reflected Tommy, "and the next boy up is a heavy hitter. I've got to strike him out. I *must* do it!"

And he did. How it thrilled him to hear the umpire shout:

"Three strikes—batter out!" for the ball was safe in Teddy's big mitt.

"Now to win!" cried Tommy, as his side came in.

There was a dispute on the part of the visitors, but the umpire held to his decision.

The visitors worked hard to hold the lead they had, but the home team was desperate.

"Fellows, you've never played better!" cried Tommy. "Go in now and win!"

Sammie Sandlass was up first, and, though he never was a very good hitter, he managed to knock what was only a two-bagger, but on which he got to third, as the boy trying to catch the ball muffed it.

"Now a home run, and the game is ours!" cried Tommy, as Frank Bonder came up. Frank was not usually very reliable, but this time he surprised all his friends.

"Go on! Go on!"

"Home run!"

"Come on in, Sammie!"

Everybody was yelling as the ball sailed down the field after Frank hit it. Oh, how he ran! Faster and faster, trying to beat the boy after the ball!

Sammie was safe at home now, with the run that tied the score, and Frank was coming. It was a close race, but Frank won.

"How's that?" demanded the visiting catcher as he stood over Frank, who was down in the dust.

"Safe!" said the umpire.

"Never!" yelled the team from Millton.

"Sure he's safe!" insisted Tommy. "Anyhow, if he isn't, it's only one out; the game is tied, and we have two more chances."

"He's safe," declared the umpire, and the visitors had to allow it. That made the score eleven to ten in favor of the home team. Tommy's nine had won the victory which he most desired. It was great!

"All right, I guess you win," admitted Dan, after a discussion. "Well, Tommy, you defeated us. You've got a fine team and a good diamond."

"Well, we worked hard for it," said Tommy. "We'll play you again next year. We're champions now! Hurrah!"

"Are you going to have the same nine?" asked Dan.

"Yes, or one like it, and, say, I'm going to have a lot of fun this fall and winter," he went on. "There are a fine crowd of boys in this town."

"There sure are," agreed Dan. And those of you who are interested in the future fortunes of Tommy may read of what he did that fall in the book to follow this, to be called "Tommy Tiptop and His Football Eleven; or, A Great Victory and How It Was Won." And after the foot-

ball season Tommy continued to be active, as he always was. I am going to tell you what he did after the eleven was disbanded, in the third book of the series, to be called "Tommy Tiptop and His Winter Sports; or, Jolly Times on the Ice and in Camp."

Over the diamond thronged the boys of the two teams, cheering each other, laughing and shouting. Of course Dan's team felt badly at losing the game, but they were glad Tommy had won, for they were quite proud of him.

"Well played, youngsters!" exclaimed Mr. Fillmore, who with his friend, the hardware man, was at the game. "Well played! It was worth seeing!"

Tommy Tiptop felt very proud and happy.

"Oh, but you are so dirty!" exclaimed his mother, who with Nellie, and some of her daughter's girl friends, had come to the contest. "So dirty and hot!"

"That doesn't matter, mother. We won! We won!" cried Tommy.

And now, as he is marching across the diamond with his friends, old and new, in their baseball suits, cheering and laughing, we will take leave of Tommy Tiptop.

THE END

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